The Role of 'A'ishah in the History of Islam

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Volume Two

`A`ishah in the time of
`Ali ibn Abi Talib`



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A word from Mahmud Abu Rayh [1]

In the name of God, the almighty

Some individuals who consider themselves men of learning, imagine that they have attained a high degree of knowledge. They take for granted that the history of Islam, especially that part which is related to the early periods of this faith, is altogether correct and wholly free from doubt and ambiguity. Such persons, who should be called unlettered simpletons, imagine that the narrators of Islamic history have been without exception chaste, truthful and trustworthy individuals. They therefore believe everything that is narrated about that period and are fully convinced about all the contents of well known books of tradition and history, whereas these book contain all kinds of subject matter including even superstitious and unacceptable points in such a way that they offer little that is right and true and much that is wrong and untrue.

The assurance of such simple persons concerning the traditions and other topics of those books has reached a point where that they may accuse anyone who expresses doubt about truth of one of these traditions and points of iniquity and excommunicate them.

Although God has granted intelligence and mental power individuals to enable them to reflect and base their judgment on fairness and justice, yet owing to their obstinacy and mental rigidity as well as their undue imitation of their predecessors they make their thought and inactive and useless, so that in being faced with logic and clear reasoning they refuse to surrender to truth and remain obstinate in their prejudice and reject that truth and criticize it.

I hope that you, too, may be secure from their stinging tongue and unmanly attacks, but this is impossible since they

will not remain silent before those who speak the truth. At the time I published my book of "Adwa' 'ala as-sunnat al-Muhammadiyah", I was involved with many difficulties by these so-called scholars.

In that book I had made a survey of the Prophet's traditions and showed how and when and by whom these traditions had been quoted, and what lies had found their way into them and how badly they had been mutilated.

In that book I mentioned these and many other illuminating points, but as soon as the book was published they abused and criticized me from every side, from Egypt, Hejaz and ash-Sham. I ignored those futile talks and bravely tolerated those abuses, since I believed in my goal and had no doubt stepped on the path of truth.

Surprisingly enough such persons are like poisonous thorns in the way of learning and knowledge, they accuse and violently attack seekers of truth and true scholars. How negligent they are of the serious and ill-omened consequences of their deeds! For, with this ugly-deed they do not only betray knowledge and truth, but also make educated and enlightened individuals pessimistically about religion and piety. These enlightened individuals wish to weigh everything with the criteria of intellect and investigation, and when they deal with religious research they are faced with the attacks of these dry sectarians and their enmity, and in consequence they become weary of Islam and Muslims.

It is now incumbent upon all scholars and learned individuals to break down the mental letters of dependence, by not following and imitating; our predecessors. We must courageously endeavour to make a careful and profound survey of Islamic history, and cleanse it from the pollution of lies, prejudices, spitefulness and misinterpretations, and bring out the truths from behind the thick clouds of imitation and alteration, and fear no criticism and reproach in this Course.

I am now very glad to express this truth and announce that a great scholar of Iraq, Professor Murtada 'Askari has risen to undertake this great scientific and religious responsibility and has published some books on this topic

which are truly the mirror of truth and right thoughts. Anyone can thus study the real and genuine history of Islam which is reflected in those books and discover the truth. This great scholar has already published a book entitled 'Abd Allah ibn Saba'[(2)] in which he has scientifically and convincingly proved that in the history of Islam there never existed such a man as Abd Allah ibn Saba, but, that this figure was created by wicked and mysterious political hands, so that, they may divert the history of Islam from its true course under the cover of this shadowy figure, to their own interests.

This noble scholar has also proved in his book that at-Tabari, the same leader of all historians, is the first person to have mentioned the name of 'Abd Allah ibn Saba', that fabulously false character, in his book, and in quoting that name he had relied only on the words of a story-teller called Sayf ibn 'Umar at-Tamimi, who was a notorious liar and fabricator of stories. Other historians have imitated at-Tabari in this matter.

Now the same exalted scholar, Professor 'Askari, has published another valuable book entitled: "Ahadith of Umm al-Mu'minin 'A'ishah" in which he has described the adventurous life of 'A'ishah. In his book through research, this author has avoided any prejudice and has tried to investigate the angles of history as they really were and to clarify them. This book is written fluently and on the basis of scholarly scrutiny, and with a full respect for both science and religion.

The exalted author has investigated several important subjects and clarified a number of facts:

1-He has pointed out that some of the traditions attributed to the Prophet of Islam are contradictory and sometimes inharmonious with Quranic verses. Some of them are even so mean and far removed from the criteria of science and intellect that they have been employed by our enemies as pretexts to attack our dear Islam and its noble prophet. Therefore it is incumbent upon scholars to classify these series of traditions from the viewpoint of evidence and narrators and deal with the evidence of each group in its proper place, so as to clarify the criterion and real value of those traditions and separate right from wrong. In this task

especially, such characters as ‘A’ishah Abu Hurayrah, Anas ibn Malik and ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Umar from whom most of the traditions have been quoted, should be subjected to a closer scrutiny, and their biography, political, social position, and mentality which deeply influenced their traditions, should be studied deeply.

2-The exalted author especially points out that the true meaning of Islamic history until the rule of Yazid is obtainable only if ‘A’ishah’s traditions and narrations are fully discussed and surveyed, since ‘A’ishah had been most active in the first period of Islam, and has assumed a significant role in the creation of historical events. She has narrated many traditions on the correctness or incorrectness of which depends the fate of Islamic history.

For this reason the exalted author has in his book of Ahadith of Umm al-Mu’minin ‘A’ishah has discussed her traditions before dealing with other subjects. In this survey, he at first describes the history of her life and divides it into several periods, he speaks of her lineage, birth place, her marriage with the Prophet, and then deals with her spirit, mental and moral qualities her conduct with the Prophet, and he also reveals her inner complexes. Thus it becomes clear that, as Shawqi the famous Egyptian poet says, she is like any other woman who adopts the way of slyness and cunning with her husband, the Prophet.

3-The learned authority of this book employs historical evidence to prove that ‘A’ishah was the real killer of ‘Uthman. For, after the Prophet she supported the first and second caliphs, and at the beginning of ‘Uthman’s rule she acted in harmony with him, but later on owing to certain reasons she opposed him and incited the people against him and eventually issued the verdict of his death.

4-After ‘Uthman’s assassination, ‘A’ishah began her opposition to ‘Ali sparing no effort in this way and adopting conduct that she would not allow towards anyone else. Her first opposition to ‘Ali began on hearing of the: people’s allegiance to him, she shouted in a great rage full of hatred:
“This matter will never end even if all the heavens descend upon the earth!” It was not long before she made Talhah and

az-Zubayr turn away from *'Ali,* and eventually the three of them prepared a large army to fight 'AIi by starting the battle of al-Jamal. In this battle she mounted a camel to engage personally in the fight.

When 'Ali became victorious in this battle, he respectfully sent her back to Medina without any injury. But she did not appreciate the generous treatment, and did not remove from her heart her rancor for 'Ali. She spent the rest of her days in full hostility to him, making use of every possible means to this end, and employing every pretext to rise against him. The flame of her heart was not extinguished until the day that 'Ali was martyred and it was then that her eyes shone with joy and she sighed with relief.

On hearing the news of 'Ali's assassination, she sang this poem: *"She (herself) attained her long cherished desire, and she felt the peace and tranquility of the hearts in the same way that one is filled with* joy *and relief at the return of one's traveler."*

There were two reasons for this hostility, one of which was the well-known incident of Jfk[3], and the other was 'Ali's marriage with Fatimah, the daughter of Khadijah. The great Islamic poet, Ahmad Shawqj, in his eloquent poem addresses 'Ali, and describes the unpleasant happenings caused by 'A'ishah against 'Ali.

In a letter written by the Imam during the bitter battle of al-Jamal to 'A'ishah Talhah and az-Zubayr, he had spoken of matters, a careful perusal of which would have made her repentant and caused her to beg God's pardon for her blunders, even though she was not likely to be forgiven.

He writes to her as follows: And you 0 'A'ishah, have stepped out of your house and have thus disobeyed God and His prophet' 'A'ishah you, are desiring something that has no connection with you! Tell me, what do women have to do with mobilizing an army and engaging in ostentation among fighting men? Tell me, what have you to do with starting a war with the believers in the qibla and causing the shedding of innocent blood? After all these matters, you pretend that you are avenging 'Uthman's blood. What have you to do with avenging 'Uthman's blood? Is it not true that he was of the

Umayyads and you are of the Banu Taym? Moreover, it was only yesterday that you exclaimed in the presence of the Prophet's companions: "Kill this Na'thal ('Uthman) who has become an infidel!" And yet today you rise up to avenge his blood! Fear God and return to your home, and cover yourself with the veil of chastity and self-respect! That is all.

These few pages have presented a brief glance at the contents of present book; for, if we were to explain the contents of the whole book, another big book would be required. Therefore, we bring our comments to an end and state in all sincerity: Anyone who wishes to learn of the facts of Islamic history since its advent till the allegiance to Yazid, should study the two valuable research books of" 'Abd Allah ibn Saba"' and "A-hadith of Umm al-Mu'minin 'A'ishah" and do so with care and reflection, since both of them have been written with the able pen of the great scholar, Mr. 'Askari.

But our expectation from Mr. 'Askari is to persevere in this course with courage and steadfastness. I beg God Almighty to aid him in the attainment' of his goal and success in this course.

Mahmud Abu Rayh
Cairo, 23 February 1962

The Persian translator's preface

The present book which is at the disposal of the reader, is the translation of a part of the book called Ahadith of Umm al-Mu'minin 'A'ishah The text of the book is written by the great traditional scholar, Mr. Sayyid Murtada 'Askari.

The religious, social and cultural services of this author are so many that he is lauded by both enemies and friends, and a description of his services requires an independent pamphlet.

One example of his scientific and cultural service is the book of "Ahadith of Umm al-Mu'minin 'A'ishah" in which he portrays the ideas, beliefs, qualities; characteristics and spiritual peculiarities of 'A'ishah for the reader and familiarizes him with the true visage of this women. This book gives an account of 'A'ishah's life and her role in producing some very important political events. But the main purpose of the author is not to give a full and detailed history and biography. He has a much wider and higher goal, namely to discuss the large and considerable number of traditions narrated by her and show to what extend they are right or wrong, reliable or unreliable.

Before beginning the discussion of this wide subject, it has been considered necessary to describe in an introduction to this book, some of the historical events in the occurrence of which 'A'ishah had played a part, in order to give a true picture of the personality of this narrator of so many traditions, thereby clarifying their value and validity.

Therefore the author has, in his study of A'ishah's adventurous life, divided it into definite parts and periods the most important of which are the following three:

l-'A'ishah in the time of 'Uthman's rule.

2-'A'ishah in the time of 'Ali's rule.

3-’A’ishah in the time of Mu’awiyah’s rule.

The first part as well as the previous periods of ‘A’ishah’s life has been translated into Persian by the learned scholar Mr. Sardar-Niya, entitled The Role of ‘A’ishah in the History of Islam.

The second part, too has been, translated at the request of the exalted author in the form of the present book and placed at the disposal of the reader, and the third part is to be translated in the near future and offered to the public.

In conclusion, it is necessary to mention the following points:

1-As the original text has been written in Arabic, this translation offers a wider opportunity for those who intend to study the book, and wherever necessary explanations have been added about historical terms etc. to; clarify the matter.

2-In view of the above objective, a free translation has been resorted to.

3-While the goal of the author has been adhered to, the topics have been arranged in the form of historical incidents and short stories and some details have been added to prevent boredom.

4-If the reader comes across certain repetitions, he should not consider it as a defect, since the author does not intend to narrate a series of historical events, but wishes to clarify certain facts through some of these events attain this goal it is only possible if a subject or an event is described by reference to all the sources even with a slight change where necessary. That is why some happenings have been repeated with the same differences that had existed in the original source.

Such repetitions, without being a defect, may also be an advantage in giving a greater reliability and clarifying the subject in a better way.

Muhammad Sadiq Najmi
Hashim Hirisi.
Qom, 1383 of the Hijrah

In the course of this discussion and survey we follow neither a theological goal, nor a historical or jurisprudentially one or such like. In other words we have no intention of criticizing the views and beliefs of a group or supporting and defending another group. Nor do we wish to praise some and slander others.

Moreover, we do not want to bring up a jurisprudentially discussion and survey the verdict of death from the viewpoint of Islamic jurisprudence. Nor is our purpose to write history so as to need to narrate all the historical details.

Our object is rather to take certain historical matters out of reliable historical texts so as to enable the reader to recognize the true visage and personality of 'A'ishah through his study of them, and become familiar with her thoughts, beliefs and spirit, thereby to clarify the true worth and validity of her traditions and narrations which will be discussed later, and to make the path of this survey easier and smoother.

Therefore, we abstain from narrating such events which have no connection with our goal and the subject under discussion, we will describe only those parts of historical events which are related to our objective. For, a description of such matters reveals the strange and mysterious personality, political, and intellectual genius of 'A'ishah. It shows how well-acquainted she was with the way of winning public opinion, and. how she managed to shake the foundation of the rule of two caliphs, resulting in the assassination of one of them, namely 'Uthman whose verdict of death was issued by her, for she, had acted as an effective agent of his death. For, without her verdict he would not have been murdered, since no one would have dared to shed a caliph's blood or to show disrespect to the position of the caliphate.

It shows also with what skill and policy she succeeded, after

‘Uthman’s assassination, despite her former rancor and hostility with him, so easily and quickly to assume the role, of the avenger of his blood and his supporter. Indeed, she was so dexterous and smart that she managed to exonerate the real assassin and present him as the supporter and avenger of the murdered. It is astonishing how she succeeded in bringing ‘Uthman’s enemies and murderers into the same military camp as his sons and friends, and create a united army to avenge ‘Uthman’s blood.

How skilful she was to accuse ‘Ali of ‘Uthman’s murder despite the fact that ‘Ali had not taken the slightest part in this event, and to be able to rouse the Muslims against him, despite his clear and brilliant record!

Indeed this amazing and unparalleled political power belongs to ‘A’ishah for which she has won fame as an outstanding historical personage.

Unfortunately so far her role and character have not been properly investigated to show her real visage and reveal true facts.

We now beg God’s aid in this task to enable us to illuminate some of these dark corners of history and reveal the truth and introduce ‘A’ishah’s true character, and thereby discover the extent of the validity and reliability of her traditions.

Sayyid Murtada ‘Askari

Part One
After the allegiance to 'Ali's rule

The most critical part of 'Ali's rule

We swear by God that we will not choose anyone but you.
One of the Prophet's Companions

When 'Uthman was killed and the rein of the Muslims' social and political affairs fell into their hands and they were freed from their allegiance which had imposed limitations on them concerning the choice of another caliph, they all turned towards 'Ali and crowded around him to swear allegiance and elect him as caliph.

at-Tabari describes this event as follows: The Prophet's companions came to 'Ali and said: " 'Uthman, caliph of all Muslims, has been killed, and today the Muslims must have a worthy leader and guardian, and we know of no worthier than you for this position since your record in Islam is longer than everyone else's and your kinship to the Prophet of God is closer and stronger."

Imam 'Ali said in answer: "No. Do not make such a proposal and do not choose me as caliph; for, I would prefer to act as a caliph's aid and adviser rather than be a caliph."

They said: "No, by God we will not leave you alone until you accept our proposal."

'Ali said: "Now that there is no alternative but to accept your allegiance, the ceremony should be held publicly in the mosque in the presence of the Muslims and with their full agreement."

at-Tabari narrates again that the Muslims including Talhah and az-Zubayr rushed upon 'Ali and said: "O 'Ali! We have come to swear allegiance and choose you as our caliph and

leader.”

Imam ‘Ali answered again: “Leave we alone and let me be as I am for, I have no need of acting as a caliph and ruler, and I am like any other Muslim. You can show allegiance to anyone you consider worthy for that position. I swear to God that I will be pleased with that choice and have no objection to it at all.”

But they were not content with ‘Ali’s answer and said emphatically: “O *‘Ali!* We swear to God that we will have none but you as our leader and caliph of the Muslims.”

at-Tabari says: After ‘Uthman’s assassination the people assembled in large groups and came several times to ‘Ali’s presence, begging him to accept the position of caliph and to hold the rein of the Muslims’ affairs. But the Imam refused to give a positive answer. When they applied to him for the last time, they said: “O ‘Ali! If the question of the caliph’s election is postponed any longer, chaos will result in Muslims’ affairs. Now we are all in need of a worthy and competent guardian like you to put our affairs in order and guide us in these turbulent times

Now ‘Ali gave a somewhat positive answer and said: “You are putting too much pressure upon me, and show too much insistence in accepting none but me. I, too, have a proposal, and if you accept it, I would be willing to accept your allegiance, otherwise I can never do so and will not undertake the heavy task of caliphate.

They said: “O ‘Ali! We accept whatever you say with all our hearts and souls.” Then they proceeded towards the mosque and assembled there ‘Ali too, arrived and, after climbing the pulpit, he said: “O people! I had no desire to take the seat of caliphate and act as your ruler. But what could I do? You would not leave me alone, and forced me to accept this heavy responsibility. I must first remind you of a point and obtain your agreement that during my caliphate these two matters will be adhered to strictly and without the smallest consideration:

1-The abolition of class privileges,

2-Equality of rights of all Muslims.

Indeed this law must become universal during my caliphate. Even I, as your emir, having control of your wealth and holding the key of the public fund, must not have the right to allot to

myself one drachma and have a share more than others." The Imam then added: "Pull out your tooth of greed, and expect no special social privilege or additional stipend from me. Do you agree with my caliphate on these conditions?"

They all said in one voice: "We do, O 'Ali! We do!" Then 'Ali said: "O God! Be a witness to this pact!" The Muslims took 'Ali's hand and the ceremony of allegiance was performed.(4)

al-Baladhuri says: The Muslims rushed eagerly towards 'Ali and shouted the slogan: "'Ali is the commander of the faithful!, *'Ali* is the commander of the faithful!" They entered his house shouting their slogans and said: "O 'Ali! You know well that the Muslims need a leader. We have chosen you as our leader and guardian. Now we have come to swear allegiance to you and entrust you with the rein of Islamic affairs."

'Ali answered: "The choice of a leader and caliph does not depend on you alone. Those who have taken part in the battle of Badr and have a longer record and a greater share in Islam, too, must participate in the election of the caliph. Their vote, too, is necessary in this choice."

When the companions heard of 'Ali's words, they came to him and said: "O 'Ali! We, too, choose you. Indeed we choose you because with your presence no one else is worthy of being caliph, and none is better than you for this position!"

After hearing their opinion, 'Ali climbed the pulpit, and prepared himself to receive the people's allegiance. They raised their arms and the ceremony of allegiance began. Talhah was the first man to swear allegiance to 'Ali. As it happened Talhah's hand was offered loosely and 'Ali is said to have taken it as a bad omen, murmuring: "He will soon break his promise!"(5)

at-Tabari says: When Talhah swore allegiance to 'Ali Habib. ibn Dhu'ayb looked at him, and said: "This allegiance will not last, since that hand which is raised is defective and faulty!"(6) While the people of Medina regarded this incident as a bad omen, Aishah considered it as a good omen and said: "Now the people will hold that defective hand of Talhah, and elect him as caliph!"

Where the verdict of death turned into the vengeance for blood

Woe to those who do not restore the caliphate to Taym's household.

'A'ishah

At the end of 'Uthman's rule 'A'ishah was greatly disgusted with the conditions of the caliphate, since she was deprived of the privileges she had enjoyed in the time of the first two caliphs. So she raised the banner of opposition to Uthman and used all her endeavour to send letters to the provinces to make the people cynical about 'Uthman's ways and rule, and rouse them to riot and rebel against him. When the flame of sedition was kindled and she found herself successful in her attempts, she departed for Mecca where she stayed, waiting for the assassination of 'Uthman and the people's allegiance to Talhah.

at-Tabari says in this connection: One day a man called al-Akhdar arrived in Mecca from Medina, when 'A'ishah saw him, she asked about the conditions in Medina.

al-Akhdar said: " 'Uthman has killed the Egyptians." She said: "We come from God and return to Him! Has 'Uthman really resorted so much to injustice and perversity as to kill even those who seek aid to defend their right and combat oppression? By God, we will not tolerate this tyranny and injustice!"

Then another man came to 'A'ishah, she asked him about the conditions in Medina, and he reported that 'Uthman was killed by the Egyptians. 'A'ishah said: "It is very strange why al-Akhdar has regarded the killers to be the murdered ones!" Since that time this incident has assumed the form of this saying:

"That man is as much of a her as al-Akhdar!"(7)

al-Baladhuri says: 'When 'A'ishah heard in Mecca of 'Uthman's death, she asked to pitch a tent in the mosque of al-Haram, and stood there addressing the people and said: "0 people! I make a prediction by 'Uthman's deeds and conduct that he will bring misfortune to his kinsmen and Muslim people, in the same way that Abu Sufyan brought misery to his kinsmen in the battle of Badr."(8)

A number of historians have narrated that when ‘A’ishah heard in Mecca the news of ‘Uthman’s death, she said: “May ‘Uthman be deprived of God’s favour! He met this ill-omened fate because of his evil deeds; for, God is never unjust to anyone.”

Sometimes she said: “May God keep him away from His favour! His sins dragged him into the abyss of annihilation, and he was punished for his deeds, O people! Grieve not for ‘Uthman’s death. Ahmar Thamudi killed Salih’s camel and thus brought misfortune and destruction upon the people of Thamud. Let not ‘Uthman like him, cause dispute and mischief among you Muslims. If ‘Uthman is killed Talhah is present amidst you as the best and ablest person to be chosen caliph. Swear allegiance to him, and abstain from division and dispersion.”

After uttering these words ‘A’ishah left for Medina with all speed, along the way she reflected about the conditions in Medina, and was never in doubt about Talhah’s attainment of the position of caliph.(9)

On the way to Medina these thoughts occupied her mind:

“May God show no favour to that Jew ‘Uthman that foolish and stupid man! Forget ‘Uthman and speak to me of Talhah! Happy is a father who has such a son as you! Praised be a mother who has begotten an offspring like you! How well they have realized that Talhah is the only man worthy of leadership, and are choosing him as caliph! He is, indeed, the only person worthy of this position! I seem to see people from a far offering him the hand of allegiance. Drive my mount faster so that I may join him soon!”

She was occupied with such thoughts on the way, when she came across ‘Ubayd ibn Umm Kilab (10) who was coming from Medina, and asked him the news from that city. He answered:-

‘Uthman has been killed, and the Muslims were left perplexed and without a guardian for eight days.”

‘A’ishah asked: “What then?”

‘Ubayd said: “Fortunately it ended well, since all the Muslims unanimously elected ‘Ali ibn Abi -Talib as caliph and guardian and swore allegiance to him.” ‘A’ishah said: “I swear to God that if the question of caliphate ends in favour of *‘Ali,* it would be fitting if all the heavens are demolished. Woe to you,

‘Ubayd, do you know what you are saying?”

‘Ubayd answered: “ ‘A’ishah be sure that things have occurred as I said.”

‘A’ishah cried out in lamentation at these words, and ‘Ubayd said: “‘A’ishah! Why are you vexed at people’s allegiance to ‘Ali? Why are you not pleased? ‘Ali is a better and worthier caliph than anyone else. There is no one as virtuous as him.”

When ‘Ubayd finished his remark, ‘A’ishah shouted: “take me back! Take me back as quickly as possible!”

Thus she returned to Mecca, but she had changed her former slogan of ordering ‘Uthman’s assassination, now she exclaimed:

“I swear to God that ‘Uthman has been killed innocently. I must rise to avenge his blood.”

‘Ubayd said: “‘A’ishah, I am amazed that yesterday you issued a verdict about ‘Uthman’s infidelity and ordered his death, calling him Na’thal and an old Jew. But how soon you have gone back on your words! For, today you call him innocent and guiltless!”

‘A’ishah said: “Yes, ‘Uthman was such a man, but he repented, and these people killed him in his innocence without paying attention to his repentance. Anyhow, what has my word of yesterday to do with you? Accept what I say today, since it is better than my words of yesterday!”

In response to ‘A’ishah, ‘Ubayd composed a poem, the translation of which is as follows:

‘A’ishah, you are the source of all these differences and riots;
The heavy storms of seditions and tumults have their origin in you;
It was you who issued the verdict of his death;
It was you who called him an infidel.
Though we took part in shedding ‘Uthman’s blood by your order;
Yet you are his true assassin since you ordered his death.
‘A’ishah, neither has the heaven descended upon the earth,
Nor have the sun or the moon eclipsed.
But the Muslims have sworn allegiance to a great man;
To a brave man who puts on chain mail in the fields of battle,
And makes selfish and unruly men object.
Is a cunning and perfidious creature.
The equal of a loyal and steadfast man?”

'A'ishah returned to Mecca and dismounted in front of Masjid al-Haram, and after covering herself walked towards Hajar al-Aswad (the Black stone in the Ka'bah), she was soon surrounded by the people. When she saw the crowd she addressed them, saying: "O people! Innocent 'Uthman has been killed, and I must lament him for his innocence. I swear to God that I will rise to avenge his blood."

Sometimes she exclaimed: "O Quraysh tribe! 'Ali killed 'Uthman! 'Uthman was a man of whose one night of his life was better than 'Ali's whole life."(11)

Abu Mikhnaf quotes the same narration and then says:

When 'A'ishah heard of the people's allegiance to 'Ali, she cried out, saying: "Woe be to them! Woe upon their life! They do not restore the caliphate (12) to the Taym tribe."(13)

Allegiance breakers

Let them alone to act upon their own wish.

Imam 'Ali

All the Muslims sincerely chose 'Ali as caliph and swore allegiance to him except for a few such as 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar, Muhammad ibn Muslamah, Usamah ibn Zayd, Hassan ibn Thabit and Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas.

Two of 'Ali's friends, namely 'Ammar and Malik al-Ashtar came to him and discussed the above individuals.

'Ammar said: "O commander of the faithful! All the people swore allegiance to you except these few people. Invite them to swear allegiance to you. They may accept your invitation, and not infringe the way of the Prophet's companions, emigrants and Ansar and not stay away from the Muslim assembly."

'Ali said: "We have no need of anyone who does not welcome us and does not sincerely accept us."

al-Ashtar said: "O Amir a1-Mu'minin! Though they have precedence over some of us in Islam, yet this precedence is no excuse for them to refuse to swear allegiance to you and disregard such an important matter as the choice of a caliph. Indeed, they must accept this allegiance like all others, and not

cause a division and disunion among the Muslims."

'Ali said: "al-Ashtar! I am more familiar than you with the thoughts of these people. Leave, them alone. It is better not to impose allegiance on them."

Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas who was one of the infringes came to the Imam and said: "O 'Ali! I swear to God that I have no doubt about your merit over others for the position of caliph. But what can I do? I am sure that very soon some of those peoples, who are offering you the caliphate today, will quarrel with you and cause war and bloodshed. I am prepared to swear allegiance to you on the condition that you let me have a tongued sword that can introduce me to anyone who deserves death."

Imam 'Ali answered: "Sa'd, the condition imposed on me by the Muslims for their allegiance has been that I should act upon the book of God and the Prophet's tradition. Has any act been performed by me contrary to them to give you a reason for your opposition to me? You are free to swear allegiance to me under the same conditions and join the Muslim community, or refuse this allegiance and stay away from the Muslim community."(14)

In addition to the above-mentioned people a number of Banu Umayyah refused to swear allegiance to 'Ali.

al-Ya'qubi, a well-known historian, quotes their own words concerning the infringement of this group as follows: Marwan ibn al-Hakam, Sa'id ibn al-'As and al-Walid ibn 'Uqbah came to 'Ali, and al-Walid said as their spokesman: " 'Ali! You have pounded us all and broken our backs. As for me, in the battle of Badr you killed my father in a sorry condition. As for Sa'id, you also killed his father who was a hero of the Quraysh, thereby breaking the back of the Quraysh. As for Marwan, you slandered and criticized his father and thus hurt his feelings. On the day 'Uthman showed benevolence to him on account of the ties of kinship and added to his stipend, you criticized 'Uthman for this matter and strongly objected to it. Despite all these complexes and vexations, we are prepared to swear allegiance to you but on condition that you first connive at what we have done in Uthman's time, and that you disregard our past oppressions to the Muslims, and not seize back from us the wealth we have gathered in Uthman's time. Secondly, you must punish and kill 'Uthman's assassins.

That was a summary of the Umayyad's proposals. But 'Ali was enraged by their words, and said angrily: "As for your claims about your fathers, I did not kill them. It was their opposition and hostility to truth and their support of polytheism and idolatry that brought about their death. As for your proposal that I should not take back the enormous wealth, which you have seized out of the public fund, in this matter justice and equity will govern us and I shall act according to the verdict of justice.

As for your other proposal that I should kill the assassins, if I do so today, a big civil war will ensue tomorrow among the Muslims." Then he added: "Put aside all these pretexts, and listen to my word, which are in your interests. I invite you towards the Book of God, and revive the Prophet's tradition among you. Accept what is right and avoid wrong. For, anyone who considers a life of right and justice to be bitter and narrow, will find a wrong life much narrower and harder. These are my last words, and you are free to accept them or to follow your own thoughts, and proceed towards any direction you wish."

Marwan said: "We will be with you and swear allegiance to you, let it happen what may!"(15)

Talhah and az-Zubayr violate their pact

I swear to God that they do not intend to visit the House of God, but to break their promise and be perfidious.

Imam 'Ali'

Both Talhah and az-Zubayr had long cherished the desire to attain the position of caliph and ruler over the realm of Islam. But as the people favored 'Ali and considered only him as worthy of that position, those two men abandoned that desire and swore allegiance to 'Ali, and seemed to have taken the lead over others in this step. For, they intended to win the favour of the caliph, thereby securing a high post and a higher share of privileges.

But contrary to their expectation, 'Ali treated them equally

with other Muslims and did not allow them the smallest privilege over that of others. Thus they foiled in their purpose, and their plan became null and void.

al-Ya'qubi speaks of the improper expectations of Talhah and az-Zubayr as follows:

These two came to 'Ali and said: "O 'Ali! After the Prophet we have been deprived of every position and each of us has Lived in retirement. Now that you are caliph, we expect you to give us a share, of governing, and entrust us with suitable posts."

'Ali answered: "Forget this suggestion; for, what position is higher for you than in being my power and strength, supporting me in difficulties, and acting as the basis of the power and stability of my government? Is a higher position accessible to any other Muslim?"(16)

Some historians narrate that 'Ali granted the governorship of Yemen to Talhah and that of al-Yamamah and Bahrain to az-Zubayr, and when he was about to hand over to them the writ of appointment, they said: "O commander of the faithful! You have preserved the ties of kinship with us and granted us that right."

'Ali at once refrained from giving them the writ and said: "I never grant the authority of the Muslims to anyone on the basis of the ties and rights of kinship!"

Talhah and az-Zubayr were enraged at 'Ali's conduct and said: "O *'Ali!* You give priority to others over us and humiliate us in their presence!"

'Ali said: "You are too interested in posts and positions, and in my opinion, greedy and ambitious individuals are never worthy to govern the Muslims, and act as their guardian!"(17)

In this connection at-Tabari writes: Talhah and az-Zubayr asked 'Ali for the governorship of Kufah and Basra. 'Ali answered: "If you stay with me and give more splendor and order to my government, it is better than your going to remote spots and being separated from me; for, I would feel lonely at this separation."(18)

As we said, 'Ali did not grant these two their desired posts, and did not let them share with him his position as caliph. This was the first factor that vexed Talhah and az-Zubayr and made them cynical of the caliph's administration resulting in their violation of allegiance and eventually in the battle of al-Jamal.

The second factor, which drove Talhah and az-Zubayr to violate their pact and lead them to war, was that ‘Ali divided public funds equally among the Muslims and gave no extra advantage to anyone. These two men were no exception to this law, but they could not digest this just and equality-seeking spirit of ‘Ali’s. So they flagrantly gave tongue to their objections and began their opposition against the system of equality.

Ibn Abi al-Hadid says: ‘Ali divided public funds among the Muslims, offering each person three dinars, and unlike the custom of ‘Umar and ‘Uthman’s time, he observed an equality between Arabs and non-Arabs.

In protest to this method of ‘Ali Talhah and az-Zubayr refused their share of this fair division. ‘Ali called them and said: “I ask you in God’s name, did you not come to me wishing me to accept the position of caliph, whereas I was reluctant to do so?” They said: “Yes.” He asked: “Did you not swear allegiance to me willingly and without any compulsion and reluctance?” They said: “Yes.” ‘Ali said: “Then what malfeasance did you notice in we to justify your opposition and protest?”

They said: “O *‘Ali!* You are well aware that we possess a precedence and excellence over other Muslims. We swore allegiance to you hoping that you would not govern without consulting us in the affairs of the realm. But now we see that you take important steps without our advise, and divide public funds without our information.”

‘Ali said: “Talhah and az-Zubayr! You are finding fault with small matters, and disregard great affairs, you sacrifice social interests and destiny of Islamic ummah for personal profits. Repent to God! May he accept your repentance! Tell me, O Talhah and az-Zubayr, have I deprived you of the right of Muslims and committed any injustice to you?”

They said: “God forbid that you should be unjust!”

‘Ali said: “Have I devoted to myself a share of this wealth and public fund?”

They said: “No! By God you have not done so.” ‘Ali said: “Has a problem ever risen for a Muslim about the solution of which I have been ignorant of or shown weakness and negligence to?”

They said: “No, by God!”

‘Ali said: “Then what fault did you observe in my rule to

make you oppose me and stay away from the Muslim community?"

They said: "The only thing that has offended and made us cynical about your government has been your opposition to the method and ways of the second caliph, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, who took into consideration the precedence and superiority of individuals in sharing public funds, and gave each person a share fitting his rank and position. But you consider all Muslims equal and ignore our privileges, whereas all these riches have been secured through our swords, activities and self-sacrifices. How could those who have submitted to our swords through fear and force and thus embraced Islam, be equal to us?"

'Ali said: "Concerning the question of consulting you in governmental matters, I had no attachment for the position of caliphate. It was you' who dragged me into it, and made me take that seat. I feared that dispersion would fall upon the Muslims and so I accepted this responsibility, and in doing so, I referred to the Book of God and the Prophet's ways and traditions and obtained the verdict about each question from them. Therefore, I had no need of consulting you or asking your help in the affairs of the caliphate since the Qur'an and traditions provided everything I needed. But if one day something should happen that the verdict of which can not be found in the Qur'an and in traditions, and I find myself in need of consulting you, then I would indeed seek your aid.

As for the question of dividing public funds equally among Muslims, this was not my own personal method, either, and I am not the first person to have chosen this way. You and I have both lived in the Prophet's time and seen his ways. He divided public fund equally among the Muslims, and did not give the smallest advantage to anyone.

Moreover, the verdict about this matter is mentioned in the Book of God, inviting us to equality and abolishing improper privileges. This Qur'an is always in front of you and its injunctions are eternal, and the smallest wrong words do not find their way into it.

As for your remark that all these riches have been secured through your swords, and thus you deserve certain privileges,

there have been individuals in the past who have aided Islam with their life and property and secured some spoils of war. Nevertheless the Prophet of God did not grant them any special advantage for it, and their precedence and activity could not be the reason for their securing a greater share. Their self-sacrifice and worthy deeds must surely have been taken into consideration at the threshold of God, and they are sure to be rewarded for their good deeds on the day of resurrection. God knows that I do not know of any duty of mine but this towards you and other Muslims. May God guide all of us to the right path and grant us patience and fortitude. May God bestow favour upon him who aids and supports right, and avoids injustice and endeavors for its overthrow."(19)

at-Tabari says about this matter: When Talhah was disappointed about obtaining some privilege, he uttered this well-known saying: "Our profit in this matter is equal to the benefit that a dog gets by licking its nose. Thus, we could not fill our belly in 'Ali's caliphate and got no position."(20)

After their allegiance to 'Ali Talhah and az-Zubayr stayed in Medina for four months waiting to receive some position and distinction, watching 'Ali's conduct and a possible change in his ways. But they saw no sign of lenience and flexibility in him or in his methods, and thus they despaired of securing any privileges. On the other hand they were informed that 'A'ishah had raised the banner of opposition to 'Ali in Mecca. So they decided to seek her aid and departed for Mecca. With this decision they visited 'Ali and begged his permission to leave for pilgrimage to the house of God. 'Ali seemed to agree and gave them leave, and then he said to his friends:

"I swear to God that their purpose of this journey is not a pilgrimage to the house of God, but this is only a pretext, the object of which, is nothing but perfidy, disloyalty and violation of the pact."

Anyhow when 'Ali gave them leave for this journey, they swore allegiance to him for the second time and left Medina for Mecca, and joined 'A'ishah's army and the party opposed to 'Ali there.(21)

Mobilization of the army

What do women have to do with campaigning?

Imam ‘Ali

When on her way to Medina the news of the people’s allegiance to ‘Ali reached ‘A’ishah, she decided to oppose him and returned to Mecca where she raised the banner of opposition to him and openly incited and encouraged the people against him. Hostile groups and parties, learning of this scheme, rushed from every side to her and joined the forces of opposition.

Talhah and az-Zubayr who opposed ‘Ali’s system of equality, as we said in the last chapter, broke their pact with ‘Ali and left his side, proceeding to Mecca and joining ‘A’ishah’s army and opposition party.(22)

On the one hand the Umayyads who had long been hostile to ‘Ali and were waiting for an opportunity to rise against his rule, on hearing of ‘A’ishah’s rise and opposition, left Medina for Mecca and placed themselves under ‘A’ishah’s banner of opposition to ‘Ali.

On the other hand the governors of ‘Uthman’s time who had been dismissed one after another by ‘Ali left with their enormous wealth gathered from public funds, from various cities towards ‘A’ishah and joined her army. Thus all the groups which had some complaint against ‘Ali gathered there.

at-Tabari quotes az-Zuhri as follows: Talhah and az-Zubayr came to Mecca four months after ‘Uthman’s murder and ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amir (23) too who had been governor of Basra in ‘Uthman’s time and was dismissed by ‘Ali left for Mecca with much wealth.

Ya’la ibn Umayyah (24), governor of Yemen who had been dismissed by ‘Ali arrived at Mecca with enormous wealth and more than four hundred camels. ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amir placed much wealth and many camels at the disposal of ‘A’ishah’s army and her warriors Ya’la ibn Umayyah, too offered az-Zubayr four hundred thousand dinars and provided the equipment of seventy fighters and offered the famous camel called ‘Askar to ‘A’ishah which he had bought for eighty dinars

(and according to al-Mas'udi for two hundred dinars), and it was this camel that 'A'ishah rode in the battle of al-Jamal.[25] They tied her litter firmly behind this camel and 'A'ishah sat in
it.

In this way all those who were opposed to 'Ali assembled in Mecca, and mobilized a huge and well-equipped army ready to fight 'Ali.

'A'ishah's army proceeds toward Iraq

'A'ishah! God has forbidden you from wandering in the desert!

Umm Salamah

at-Iabarl says: In Mecca 'A'ishah gathered a round her all the parties that were opposed to 'Ali and thus, she prepared a large and well-equipped army, and then assembled the commanders for a council of war. Some of them said: We should go directly to Medina and fight 'Ali with this army. Others said: We cannot stand up against 'Ali's forces with this weak and small army, or attack the capital of the Islamic realm. We should first proceed to ash-Sham and ask the aid of Mu'awiyah in military forces and equipment and then engage in a war with 'Ali. Another group suggested moving to Iraq first and obtaining reinforcements from the people of the two large cities of Kufah and Basra where Talhah and az-Zubayr had many supporters, and then being better prepared and equipped, proceed to Medina and fight 'Ali there.

All the members of this council approved of this suggestion, and so 'A'ishah ordered the army to be ready and proceeded from Mecca towards Iraq with seven hundred warriors. All along the way volunteers joined them until their number rose to three thousand.[26]

Umm Salamah speaks with 'A'ishah

Ibn Tayfur says: On the days that 'A'ishah was going to leave for Basra with her army, Umm Salamah met her and said:

'A'ishah! Your God has put limitations upon you. Do not step

beyond His command. In respect for His prophet, God has placed a veil between you and the people. Do not show disrespect to the Prophet by tearing down that veil. God has allotted you the corner of a house. Do not turn it into wandering in the desert. ‘A’ishah! The Prophet knew you better and was perfectly aware of your position. If it were advisable for you to interfere in such matters, he would surely have given you an instruction, about it and made an arrangement with you, but he has not done so, and on the contrary he has forbidden such acts. ‘A’ishah! If the Prophet saw you on this route, what would you say? Fear God and be ashamed before the Prophet! For God is watching your deed and conduct, your smallest acts are not hidden from the Prophet either.

‘A’ishah! The way you have adopted is so repellent and contrary to human virtue, that, if I were in your place and were ordered to go to heaven, I would feel ashamed to meet the Prophet there, Do not abandon your modesty and humbleness, stay in the corner of your house till death, so as to satisfy the Prophet of God.”

According to some historians, Umm Salamah ended her words with this sentence: ‘A’ishah! If I were to repeat for you what I have heard from the Prophet about this matter, you would twist with pain and cry out!

‘A’ishah answered: “Umm Salamah! Though I have always followed your advice, I will not in this case do so. For, there is a fine journey ahead of me, and I intend to establish peace between the two groups of Muslims who are hostile to each other, and put an end to their differences.”(27)

Reports of the route

“O wives of the Prophet! Stay in your houses till death!”
The Qur’an

al-Haw’ab’s dogs will bark at he.
The Prophet of Islam

‘A‘ishah equipped her army, which was composed of various

groups and parties opposed to ‘Ali and proceeded towards Iraq, and now we will describe the incidents, which occurred on the way until she reached Basra.

Differences about acting as leader of the congregational prayer

at-Tabari says: When ‘A’ishah’s army left Mecca, outside that city Marwan recited the call for prayer. Then he went to Talhah and az-Zubayr and said: Which one of you should I consider as Emir and present to the people as congregational leader? As Talhah and az-Zubayr could not explicitly express their opinion in each other’s presence and offer their candidacy for that position, their sons took the lead, and each of them supported his father as a nominee. ‘Abd Allah spoke in favour of his father az-Zubayr and Muhammad did the same for his father Talhah thus creating differences between them. When ‘A’ishah was informed of this matter, fearing that hostility would be created in the army about this question, she summoned Marwan and said: “Marwan what are you doing? Why do you cause disunion in the army with your action? The prayer must be performed with the Imamate of my brother’s son, ‘Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr.”

According to her order, until reaching Basra, ‘Abd Allah kept this position as leader of prayer. When Ma’adh ibn ‘Ubayd Allah noticed the disagreement between Talhah and az-Zubayr, he said: “By God! Even if we win victory, violent differences will arise between us on the question of caliphate; for, neither az-Zubayr nor Talhah are ready to forego their claim of this position, and each of the two refuses to grant it to the other.”(28)

Differences in the question of leadership

at-Tabari says that when ‘A’ishah’s army halted at Dhat ‘Irq, Sa’id ibn al-’As (29) who was a Quraysh aristocrat of the Umayyads and was in ‘A’ishah’s army, said to Marwan and his friends: “If your object is really avenging ‘Uthman’s blood, whither are you going since the assassins of ‘Uthman are in this very army?(30) Kill them and return to your homes. What is the point of fighting ‘Ali and getting killed?”

Marwan and his friends answered: “We are going to get

reinforcements in order to kill all the assassins of ‘Uthman.”

Then Sa’id contacted Talhah and az-Zubayr and said: “Be honest with me, and tell the truth! If you win victory in this war, whom will you entrust with the position of caliph?”

They said: “Either of us who is chosen by the people.” Sa’id said: “If you have really risen to avenge ‘Uthman’s blood, you had better entrust his sons with the position of caliph.”

They answered: “Should we put aside old and great Emigrants and give the rein of affairs to their inexperienced young men.

Sa’id said: “I have no intention of seizing the caliphate back from the house of Abd Manaf (31) and giving it to others.” After saying this he returned from there.

‘Abd Allah ibn Khalid ibn Usayd, too, who was of the Umayyads, withdrew from the army. al-Mughayrah ibn Shu’bah ‘who was of the Thaqif tribe, observing the above scene, gathered the members of his tribe and said to them: “Any member of the Thaqjf tribe who is present in this army, should return home.”(32) Thus they did so, and the rest of the army continued its way.

The Third difference

at-Tabari continues his narration and says: After the rise of differences on the question of caliphate and withdrawal of some participants from the army, ‘A’ishah’s forces departed from Dhat ‘Irq, having al-Walid and Aban two of ‘Uthman’s sons amongst them. But for the third time, too, differences arose in the army, some proposing departure to ash-Sham and others to Iraq. In this connection az-Zubayr consulted his son ‘Abd Allah and Talhah asked the advice of ‘Alqamah whom he preferred to his own son, they reached on agreement to have Iraq as their destination, and thus they put an end to the difference in the army.(33)

The incident of al-Haw’ab

The fourth happening which occurred for ‘A’ishah’s army on the way to Iraq was as follows: Talhah and az-Zubayr were informed on the way that ‘Ali had left Medina and had reached the halting place of Dhu Qar, and had blocked their way to

Kufah. So they decided to abandon the plan of going to Kufah; and by choosing a by-way they proceeded towards Basra until they reached a place called al-Haw'ab. When 'A'ishah heard dogs barking she asked the name of the place and they told her it was al-Haw'ab.

Here 'A'ishah remembered the words of the Prophet to his wives about the dogs of al-Haw'ab, warning them about it. The memory of it worried and frightened 'A'ishah, and she said: "We are from God and return to Him. I am the woman whose future he predicted."

Thus 'A'ishah changed her mind about the journey and decided to return back: When 'Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr learnt of her decision, he went to her discussed the matter, pretending that those who had spoken about the place, had made a mistake about its name, and this was not al-Haw'ab.

After this incident 'Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr constantly watched 'A'ishah to see that no one would contact her again and dissuade her from that journey. Thus he shadowed her until they reached Basra.(34)

Interpellations of 'A'ishah's military commanders

'A'ishah! Tell us what your purpose of *this journey is!*

Abu al-Aswad

at-Tabari narrates that 'A'ishah's army left Mecca and reached the vicinity of Basra and stopped at a place called Hafr Abu Musa.

'Uthman ibn Hunayf al-Ansari who had been appointed governor of Basra by 'Ali, hearing of the matter, ordered Abu al-Aswad ad-Du'ali to go to 'A'ishah's military camp and meet her commanders and investigate their purpose.

Abu al-Aswad went there and got in touch with 'A'ishah first and asked: " 'A'ishah! What is your purpose of Coming to Basra?"

'A'ishah said: "We have come here to avenge 'Uthman's blood

and punish his assassins."

Abu al-Aswad said: "There are none of 'Uthman's assassins in Basra to be punished."

'A'ishah said: "Abu al-Aswad! You are right. 'Uthman's assassins are not in Basra. We have not come to find them here. We have come to ask for people's aid and with their support to bring vengeance upon 'Uthman's assassins who have gathered around 'Ali in Medina. Abu al-Aswad! On that day when 'Uthman hurt you with his scourges I felt uneasy, and protested strongly to him. But how can I remain silent when you rushed upon him with your sword and killed him, and did not lament his innocence? No Abu al-Aswad, I shall never remain silent!"

Abu al-Aswad said: " 'A'ishah! What have you to do with swords and scourges? You are the veiled and secluded wife of the Prophet, and according to his order your only duty is to retire to your house, recite the Qur'an and worship your God. 'A'ishah! Islam does not impose jihad on women. Moreover, avenging 'Uthman's blood is not your duty, 'Ali has a better and worthier claim for this vengeance, since he has a closer kinship with 'Uthman than you have. Both of them belong to the Abd Manaf house, whereas you are of the Taym tribe."

'A'ishah said: "Abu al-Aswad! I will not alter my decision, and I will not give up my plan. I will carry on to attain my goal and fulfill the purpose of my uprising. You said that war and jihad are not women's duty. What war? What jihad? Is there a question of war and jihad? I am in such a position that no one dares to engage in war with me, let alone the actual occurrence of a war!"

Abu al-Aswad said: "'A'ishah, you are mistaken in this very matter, for you will be fought so strongly that the easiest scene of it will kindle a fire and break the back."

Here Abu al-Aswad ended his talk with 'A'ishah. Then he got in touch with az-Zubayr and said: "az-Zubayr! The day is not yet forgotten when the people swore allegiance to Abu Bakr when you held your sword, and uttering slogans, said: 'None is better and worthier than 'Ali is for the caliphate, and the fine garment of caliph is fitting for none but 'Ali. But to day you are holding the same sword and have risen against 'Ali! az-Zubayr! Where is that sympathy and support, and what is this hostility

and opposition?"

az-Zubayr answered that 'Uthman's blood must be avenged.

Abu al-Aswad said: "We have heard that you people have been the overseers of 'Uthman's murder, and 'Ali did not take the slightest part in it."

az-Zubayr said: "Abu al-Aswad! Go to Talhah to hear what he says!"

Abu al-Aswad narrates that he went to Talhah and found him to be a rough and seditious man seriously desiring war, and there was no use at all of talking to him.(35)

According to another report, Abu al-Aswad said: " 'Imran ibn al-Hasin and I went to 'A'ishah on behalf of 'Uthman ibn Hunayf, governor of Basra and asked her to explain what motive had brought her there, and said: "Do you hear a decree from the Prophet for this uprising and journey? Or have you taken this step according to your own personal view?"

'A'ishah said: "I do not have a decree from the Prophet about this matter, but have reached a personal decision for avenging 'Uthman's blood since the day he was assassinated.

For, in 'Uthman's time we openly protested to him on why he treated the Muslims unjustly and whipped them, and why he allowed his kith and kin to seize public land and pastures for their flocks and cattle to graze on. We reminded him of that wicked and tyrannical man, al-Walid who was driven a way by the Prophet and whom the Qur'an had called an evildoer (36) who was appointed as Emir and ruler of Muslims. We told him all this, and he accepted all that we said. He regretted his deeds, and with the water of repentance cleansed himself and made up for his blunders. But you people did not in the least value his repentance, and rushed upon him with your sharp swords and killed him in his house in all his innocence. You smashed the greatness of the Islamic realm, Medina, and the dignity of the caliphate and the respect due to the month of Dhu al-Hijjah, which was greatly revered in Islam. How and why can I remain silent before this injustice and oppression, and keep quiet before this disobedience and transgression?"

Abu al-Aswad said: " 'A'ishah! What have you to do with whips and swords? Had the Prophet not forbidden your interference in such affairs? Had he not recommended you to

remain in the corner of your house? Why have you, done contrary to your exalted husband's order, and emerged from your house, starting riot and sedition among the Muslims?"

'A'ishah answered: "Abu al-Aswad! What riot and sedition? Does there anyone want to fight me, or to speak against me so as to cause riot and sedition? Such a thing will never occur, and no one would dare to engage in such acts against me."

Abu al-Aswad said: "'A'ishah! If this opposition and rebellion of yours continues, the people will fight you and a great sedition will start."

'A'ishah said: "You low fellow of the Banu 'Amir tribe! Cut shorts your wounds! Who is there to dare fight the wife of the Prophet?"(37)

Here ended the dialog between 'A'ishah and Abu al-Aswad, without her being influenced by his words. She remained firm in her decision and proceeded from Hafr Abu Musa with her army, and on reaching near Basra, she halted there.

Speeches by 'A'ishah's commanders

Indeed 'Uthman altered the just *regime of Islam.*
'A'ishah

A'ishah's army entered Basra and chose al-Mirbad, one of the large squares of the city, for her camp. 'Uthman ibn Hunayf al-Ansari who was appointed as governor of Basra by the caliph 'Ali, Again sent some deputies to al-Mirbad (38) to talk with the commanders of 'A'ishah's army and find out their purpose.

When 'A'ishah saw that her army and the people of Basra had gathered all in the same spot, she used this opportunity to deliver an exciting oration to them, saying.

"O people! Though 'Uthman emir of the believers, was once diverted from the path of right and justice, and injured the Prophet's companions, and appointed corrupt and inexperienced youths to the affairs, and supported perverse and corrupt individuals who were subjected to God's wrath and rejected by the people, and though he had allotted public pastures to

himself and Banu Umayyah, yet, despite all these acts, when the people protested to him and reminded him of the serious consequences of his deeds, he took their advice and became penitent of his wicked acts and washed himself with the water of repentance and cleansed himself of his sins.

But a number of people, without paying attention to his repentance and regret, shed his innocent blood and killed him and in doing so they smeared their hands with greater sins; for, they killed him like a sacrifice camel, in his sacred garment of caliphate, in a month in which war and blood shed are forbidden, namely the month of Dhu al-Hijjah, and in a city, namely Medina, the respect for which has been declared incumbent on all by Islam.

Remember, O people, that the Quraysh are the real agents of ‘Uthman’s assassination, and by his death they have made themselves the target of their own arrows, and with their fist they have covered their own mouths with blood. Through ‘Uthman’s death they did not attain their goal and gained no benefit. I swear to God, that such a calamity will befall them that it will annihilate them, a fire-kindling and destructive calamity! A calamity that will awaken sleepers and will throw up the sitters from their seats.

Indeed our just God will have them dominated by a people for this injustice so that the smallest pity will not be shown to them, and they will be tortured with the severest and most painful chastisements.

O people! ‘Uthman’s guilt was not such as to deserve death. Moreover, you compelled him to repent, and without taking his repentance into consideration, you rushed upon him and shed his innocent blood. Then without consulting the people, you swore allegiance to ‘Ali, and helped him to usurp the seat of the caliphate. Do you suppose that I should be angry in your favour at the whips and abuses of ‘Uthman but that I should remain silent today and not be angry about the swords that you have brought down upon him?

O people! Be wary that ‘Uthman was killed in his innocence. It Is up to you to discover his assassins and kill them wherever you find them. Then you can hold a council and elect one of those who had been nominated as caliph by ‘Umar. But none of

the assassins of ‘Uthman[39] should be allowed to have the smallest role in the question of Caliphate participate in or the council for electing the caliph.”[40]

az-Zuhri says when ‘A’ishah’s oration ended, Talhah and az-Zubayr, too, rose and addressed the people as follows: “O people! Every sin has repentance, and every sinner can regret his sin and turn back, as a result of which repentance he will be purified and forgiven, though ‘Uthman was guilty, yet his sin was repeatable and forgivable. We had no intention him, and make him repent. But a number of ignore and riotous people decided to kill him and dominated us gentle, patient and peaceable individuals and consequently they killed him.”

When Talhah and az-Zubayr reached this point, the people of Basra began to protest, and cried out: “Talhah! When your letters arrived for us, they had a very biting tone. Their contents were quite contrary to what you are saying to day!”

Here az-Zubayr in order to calm down the people, began to speak and said: “0 people! I have not written you any letter about ‘Uthman. If there has been a letter sent to you, it is by others.” Then he followed up his precious remarks in order to show the innocence of ‘Uthman at a greater length, and severely criticized ‘Ali and his followers.[41]

Protests to the speakers

You have kept your wives at home and have made ‘A’ishah Umm al-Mu’minin your leader!

The objectors

After the fiery speeches of ‘A’ishah and her army commanders at al-Mirbad, some of the audience rose and protested openly.

l-at-Tabari who quotes the speeches of ‘A’ishah’s commanders says: At this time, a man of the ‘Abd al-Qays family rose and said: “Be quiet, az-Zubayr! And let me speak to inform the people of what is necessary.” ‘Abd Allah, son of az-Zubayr angrily said to him: “O ‘Abdi! It is not up to you to speak!” But he paid no attention to ‘Abd Allah’s reprimand, and addressing ‘A‘ishah’s army, he said: “You group of Emigrants [42]

have attained the greatest honour and excellence in your lives. It was you who first gave a positive answer to the call of the Prophet.

Other people followed your example in embracing Islam and welcomed it with all their heart and soul. When the Prophet departed his life to join the visage of God, you chose a man among your selves and swore allegiance to him. We did not oppose you even though you did not consult us and took the step without informing us, and we gave our consent to your choice. His life came to an end, and he chose one of you as caliph, and again you swore allegiance to him without informing us. We submitted to you and agreed to show him allegiance. He, too on departing this world, placed the choice of a caliph in the hands of six people who worked as a council, and then you elected 'Uthman from among those six and swore allegiance to him. But you disapproved of his ways soon after, and protested against his deeds and went so far as to smear your hands with his blood, whereas you had consulted us neither in his election as caliph, nor about his death. Then you rushed to 'Ali's house, implored and even forced him to accept the caliphate, despite his unwillingness and you swore allegiance to him. You have done all these without our knowledge and advice. But I do not know why you have now risen in sedition against him and have prepared to fight him. Has 'Ali betrayed and encroached upon Muslim property and wealth, or acted contrary to right, or committed a deed disapproved by you? No! He is innocent of all charges! Why, should we fight him?"

At this moment 'A'ishah's soldiers were so enraged at this man's words of truth that they decided to kill him. But his kith and kin rose in his defense and helped him to escape. But the matter did not end here, and the next day a fight took place between 'A'ishah's army and that man's tribe, seventy of whose members were killed unchivalrously. (43)

When Imam 'Ali heard of this matter, he became very vexed, and composed an elegy in their memory the translation of which is as follows:

"The injustice done to the Rabi'ah is both sorrowful and regrettable,
The Rabi'ah who were always obedient to their leader; and

submissive,

Indeed they were always supporters of right and truth;

And offered their blood in the way of God."[44]

2-Again at-Tabari quotes Nasr ibn Muzahim saying: Jariyah ibn Qudamah stood before 'A'ishah's army and said: "'A'ishah! I swear to God that the sin of shedding 'Uthman's blood was less than your riding this cursed camel, coming out of your house and entering the field of battle like men! 'A'ishah! You possessed worth and respect in the Islamic society, but with this action your respect has gone with the wind, and smashed your greatness and reverence, and you have exposed yourself to death; for, he who fights you, will not abstain from shedding your blood. 'A'ishah! If you have covered all this distance at your own will return home from this very spot. However if they hive dragged you despite your unwillingness, ask for the Muslims' aid, to deliver you from those who have forced you to come here."[45]

3-at-Tabari continues to write: When Jariyah finished talking, a young man of Banu Sa'd rose and addressed Talhah and az-Zubayr saying: "az-Zubayr! Were you not a friend and supporter of the Prophet? Talhah! Was it not you who defended your prophet zealously against the enemies' swords? But what has happened today that has changed all friendship and loyalty to injustice and treason? I shall never co-operate with you people who have left your women at home and have dragged the wife of the Prophet here, and I shall not approve of this action of yours.

The young man then stood aside from the army and composed a poem the translation of which is as follows:

"I swear to God that it is wholly unfair to let your wives stay at home, and drag the Prophet's wife to the battle field.

It was 'A'ishah's duty to sit, at home and preserve her own honour; and yet she let herself be dominated by the desire to wander in the desert and gallop about on camel back,

She has no goal but to let all the Muslims who are like her children, fight one another with swords and spears so that she may watch them.

Talhah and az-Zubayr ruined her respect and prestige. These are their evil goals and their ill-omened ideals."[46]

4-at-Tabari adds: At this time a young man of the Juhaynah tribe went to Muhammad ibn Talhah who was an ascetic and inquired the identity of 'Uthman's assassins. Muhammad said:

"'Uthman's blood lies with three people: One-third lies with this litter- riding lady, another third lies with the man who is on that red-haired camel (Talhah), and the remaining third on 'Ali's neck."

The young man laughed on hearing those words of Muhammad, and composed poem the translation of which is as follows:

"I inquired about the assassination of a person who was refused burial in a Muslim's cemetery ('Uthman) and asked Talhah's son for an explanation.

He answered: His blood is one the neck of three people:

One is the litter-rider; the second is the camel-rider, And the third is 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. As for us, we were desert dwellers and nothing to do with these affairs.

I said in answer: You are right in saying that litter-rider and camel-rider are 'Uthman's assassins,

But concerning Ali, You are mistaken and have gone astray!" (47)

Part Two
Battle of al-Jamal

The first battle begins

'A'ishah's soldiers beheaded some and cunningly killed others.
Imam 'Ali

at-Tabari says; when 'A'ishah's army entered Basra, 'Uthman ibn Hunayf, 'Ali's governor, came forward and addressing the army, said: "What is your objection to 'Ali That gives you a reason for rising up against him?" They said: "Our first objection is that he has no superiority over us at all, but he wants to govern us, and this is not acceptable.

Secondly he has done something that leaves room for every objection and criticism."

'Uthman ibn Hunayf said: "I am the governor of this city by 'Ali's order, and have no personal view or authority. Give me a period of grace to write a letter to the commander of the faithful to inform him of your demands and proposals and see what he says and what instruction he gives."

They accepted 'Uthman's suggestion, and made and agreement to which they called God as witness, thus reinforcing the pact. 'Uthman wrote to 'Ali about this matter, but within two days 'A'ishah's army disturbed the peace of the city, and rushed upon 'Uthman and arrested him. Then they whipped him and plucked out the hair of his head and face.(48)

Some other historians like al-Ya'qubi, al-Mas'udi and the author of al-Isti'ab (49) have described the event as follows: A peace agreement was concluded between 'A'ishah's army and 'Uthman ibn Hunayf to the effect that both sides should abstain from war and bloodshed, and allow 'Uthman to govern Basra as

before and keep order there until the arrival of ‘Ali to negotiate with the opponents himself or to express his view in writing. The peace agreement was written for and by both forces, and then on the basis of this pact ‘Ali’s governor ordered his supporters and soldiers to lay down their arms in order to make peace and order more attainable.

But within a few days on a very cold and rainy night a number of ‘A’ishah’s soldiers commanded by ‘Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr attacked the governor’s house in Basra, arrested ‘Uthman ‘Ali’s governor, and then raided the treasury, scattered the guards and killed forty of them.(50)

al-Mas’udi gives the number of the killed in addition to the wounded at seventy, of whom fifty were beheaded in front of others after their arrest in order to frighten the people.

at-Tabari and the author of al-Isti’ab say: After the arrest of ‘Uthman ibn Hunayf, they sent Aban son of ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan to ‘A’ishah to decide his fate ‘A’ishah ordered his death and said: Aban! Behead ‘Uthman ibn Hunayf who is of the Ansar in vengeance of your father ‘Uthman ibn-Affan who was assassinated by the Ansar.”

When the order for the execution of ‘Uthman ibn Hunayf was announced, a woman went to ‘A’ishah and said: “O Umm al-Mu’minin! I beg you in the name of God not to disregard the respect due to ‘Uthman ibn Hunayf who is one of the friends and companions of the Prophet, but connive at his death.” ‘A’ishah was impressed by the words of that woman, and gave the order to bring back Aban. Aban returned to ‘A’ishah who said to him: Abstain from killing ‘Uthman and put him in prison.

Aban said: “ ‘A’ishah! If I had known that you intended to mitigate ‘Uthman’s punishment and change his death to imprisonment, I would not have come back except after carrying out your first order and beheading him to avenge my father.”

It was then that according to the counsel of Mujashi’ ibn Mas’ud they dealt ‘Uthman forty strokes of the whip, and plucked away the hairs of his head, face and eyelashes in a pitiable way, and then threw him into a dungeon.(51)

al-Ya’qubi, the well-known historian, narrates that after the raid on the governor’s palace and arrest of ‘Uthman ibn Hunayf

‘A’ishah’s army raided the treasury of public funds and pillaged everything there, Thus the first battle of ‘A’ishah’s army ended with their victory and they took possession of the governor’s palace, the treasury and had complete control of the city of Basra.

The second battle begins

O God! Be our witness, for, you are just and the redresser.
Hakim

at-Tabari says: The matter of the capture of ‘Uthman ibn Hunayf was reported to Hakim ibn Jabalah (62) who was one of the highly-placed elders of Basra. He went to ‘Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr with some people of Basra who were of the ‘Abd al-Qays and Bakr ibn Wa’il tribes and asked him to carry out the terms of the peace pact which they had violated, and according to its purport ‘Uthman ibn Hunayf should be transferred from prison to the governor’s palace and allowed to rule Basra as before until the arrival of ‘Ali.

Hakim ibn Jabalah ended his talk with these words: “‘Abd Allah! I swear to God that if I should find some friends and helpers, I would fight you severely for violating your pact and killing a number of innocent Muslims in order to avenge their blood. ‘Abd Allah! You do not fear God for putting the Muslims to the sword and shedding their blood.”

‘Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr said: “Hakim! We killed them in retaliation of ‘Uthman’s assassination and shed their blood.”

Hakim said: “ ‘Abd Allah! Fear God and this wrath! For, none of them were ‘Uthman’s assassin, and none of them took a part in it.”

‘Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr said: “Hakim! To be brief our last word is that so long as ‘Uthman ibn Hunayf does not depose of ‘Ali as caliph, and does not adopt immunity from him, we will not set him free from prison.”

Here Hakim turned his face to heaven and said: “O just God! Be a witness that I have communicated to these people all the

necessary advice and benevolent wishes. But they took no counsel. You are a just and a true witness."

Then Hakim turned to his friends and said: "I consider it my duty to fight these people, and any of you, who does not regard this combat as his duty, can leave the rank of our friends." Saying this, he and his friends attacked 'A'ishah's army and thus a bloody battle ensued between them. In the heat of the fight, a man of 'A'ishah's army took Hakim by surprise and brought his sword down upon his leg, cutting it off at the forced. Hakim picked up the severed leg and threw it hard at the man's neck, knocking him down and then hopping on one leg, threw himself on the man and killed him, and then leaned against his body. At that moment a passerby asked him who had brought that calamity upon him Hakim said: "This same man that I am using as a cushion." But as Hakim's wounds were so serious and mortar he died where he was.(53)

at-Tabari says: After 'A'ishah's army killed Hakim they decide to kill 'Uthman ibn Hunayf. 'Uthman said: "You know that my brother, Sahl ibn Hunayf is the governor of Medina. If you kill me, he will destroy all your families and relatives in Medina." So they waived aside his execution and set him free.(54)

Civil war begins

Friends of the Prophet's! Don't miss the prayer, don't miss the prayer!

Muslims

'A'ishah's army was victorious in the first and second battles and they captured the whole city of Basra, but this was followed by civil war and intense internal clashes. For, Talhah was trying to secure the distinction of acting as congregational leader of the first prayer after victory, which would serve as a sign of approving his nomination as caliph. az-Zubayr, too, was making an effort for the same purpose, and thus violent tension and a dispute arose between them for this prayer Imamate, 'and lasted so long that the time for prayer was about to expire, and so the people in the congregation began shouting loudly:

"Prayer! Prayer! Friends of the Prophet! Don't miss the prayer, and beware of missing it!" But the dispute went on until 'A'ishah herself intervened, and ordered both Talhah and az-Zubayr to retire from the altar and the congregational prayer. She let Muhammad son of Talhah act as leader for one day, and 'Abd Allah son of az-Zubayr for the next day.

The author of Tabaqat says: The dispute did not end even with 'A'ishah's proposal for, another disagreement arose as to who should act as leader of the first prayer. So when one of them stood at the altar, the other pushed him away to take his place. It was then decided to solve the question by drawing lots. Muhammad ibn-Talhah won the lot and so the first prayer was performed with his Imamate, and it was in the same prayer that he recited the first verse of the Quranic chapter al-Ma'arij meaning: *"One demanding, demanded the chastisement which must befall the unbeliever."By* doing so he intended to reproach 'Abd Allah by means of this verse for his pride and humiliate him for his own victory.(55)

The author of al-Aghani says: A poet composed a poem about the difference which arose between Talhah and az-Zubayr and their sons concerning the Imamate of the prayer, the translation of which is as follows:

"These two youths disputed on the question of alter and prayer Imamate, And this was a sign of their desire for position. Their father, Talhah and az-Zubayr are extremely ambitious and eager for position, What do I have to do with Talhah and az-Zubayr? For, their leader 'Ali is now accessible to me. Talhah and az-Zubayr are deceived by their mothers. And Ya'la ibn Ummayyah has led them towards the abyss of destruction and misfortune.(56)

Where the truth is revealed

Alas! My back is broken!

az-Zubayr

at-Tabari, quoting Jawn ibn Qutadah, says: I was with az-Zubayr when a rider on horseback came and greeted him, and

az-Zubayr returned the greeting. Then the man said:

'Ali's army has now reached a certain point, but it is poorly equipped, small in number, and full of fear and alarm."

Then another horseman came and after saluting az-Zubayr said: "Emir! 'Ali's army is advancing and has reached such and such a point. But when they heard of your number and military equipment, they were frightened and returned the way they had come.

az-Zubayr said: "Be quick! What are you saying? Your words show your falsehood and flattery, for even if *'Ali* could only find a stick, he would fight with that stick and would not abandon his course.

Jawn ibn Qutadah adds: *'Ali's* army had almost reached near Basra when another horseman arrived and said:

"O Emir! 'Ali's army is hastening towards you and 'Ammar is with him. I was him myself and talked with him."

az-Zubayr said: "You must be mistaken! 'Ammar could not be in 'Ali's army."

The horseman said: "I swear to God, O Emir, there is no mistake, 'Ammar is definitely in 'Ali's army."

Az-Zubayr said: "I swear to God, that God would not place 'Ammar in 'Ali's army!"

The horse man said: "And I swear to God that he was in 'Ali's army.

The more. az-Zubayr denied this point, the more the horseman insisted on his point about 'Ammar being present in 'Ali's army. When az-Zubayr saw the man's insistence, he ordered one of his intimates to go to 'Ali's army and investigate the matter.

Jawn ibn Qutadah says: The man went and returned soon after and said:

"az-Zubayr! I swear that what the man has said is quite true. I saw 'Ammar myself in 'Ali's army." Now az-Zubayr realized that this was true and so he cried out involuntarily: "Alas! My back is broken and my nose is rubbed in the dirt and he trembled so violently that his weapons shook on his body."

Jawn says: On seeing this scene I seemed to have been suddenly awakened from oblivion and said to myself: "Woe upon me who wanted to fight under the authority of this man, and be

killed for his sake, whereas he realizes his own perversity and deviation from the Prophet to make him tremble so."[57]

(Indeed the Prophet had spoken of 'Ammar as a measure and criterion of truth, and the presence of 'Ammar anywhere would be an evidence of the rightfulness of that party. It was for this reason that az-Zubayr was badly alarmed at the presence of 'Ammar in 'Ali's army.)[58]

Talhah and az-Zubayr are in doubt about their objective

While we have still not recognized our way, we are acting as guides to others.

az-Zubayr

at-Tabari quotes 'Awf al-A'rabi: Talhah and az-Zubayr were in the mosque of Basra when a man entered and, addressing them, said: "For God's sake, tell me, has the Prophet of God instructed you about this war and uprising?"

As Talhah had no answer to give he feigned ignorance and went out of the mosque. Then the man turned to az-Zubayr and repeated the same question, and asked whether they were acting on their own initiative.

az-Zubayr said: "No, we have no order or instruction from the Prophet about this matter. The reason why we have come to Basra is that a huge amount of public funds have been collected from your city, and we have come to take our share of it."

After narrating the above story, he quotes Abu 'Amrah, az-Zubayr's personal slave and steward, as saying: After the people of Basra swore allegiance to Talhah and az-Zubayr, the latter addressed the people of Basra and said: "If you provide me with one thousand armed warriors, I shall never give 'Ali the chance to enter Basra, and I shall destroy his forces in one surprise assault."

But the people of Basra gave no answer and showed no agreement. When az-Zubayr saw this, he said to them: "O people! This is the mischief and sedition of which the Prophet - used to speak, warning us of it."

Abu ‘Amrah says: I protested to az-Zubayr and said: “O az-Zubayr! Why do you hasten towards an act which you call mischief and sedition?”

az-Zubayr said: “Be quiet! Though we show the way to others, yet we are perplexed about distinguishing our own way, and are in doubt and waver in carrying out our decision. All through my life, I have always paid attention to the consequence of my deed, but in this matter I cannot realize the consequence.”(59)

Again at-Tabari quotes ‘Alqamah ibn Waqqas(60), saying: “In those days when Talhah, az-Zubayr and ‘A’ishah were moving along with their army towards Basra to fight ‘Ali, I carefully watched Talhah’s face and found him to be always very uneasy and worried. He used to sit all by himself pensive and deep in thought. One day I asked him why he was so pensive and what had made him so uneasy, and if he did not like to rise up and fight against ‘Ali, he could easily retire and go home.”

Talhah answered him as follows: “ ‘Alqamah! Once we Muslims were united and unanimous against the enemies, but today, we are unfortunately divided into two opposite groups, facing each other like two iron mountains and calling each other to fight.” Then Talhah ended his remark by saying: “‘Alqamah! In the incident of ‘Uthman’s assassination I have committed a mistake which is irreparable unless my blood is shed in the way of avenging his blood.”(61)

These two pieces of evidence taken from a reliable historical source show clearly that Talhah and az-Zubayr were wholly doubtful about their goal, and did not really have any faith in it, and wavered about their actions, and feared the consequence of their deeds, and sometimes they involuntarily expressed this fear and anxiety.

But Imam ‘Ali, unlike them, had perfect faith in his goal, and in his sermons and orations, he said: “I am convinced that God will aid and support me in this war, and victory will be granted to us. For I am convinced that I am right and innocent in this war, and there is not the slightest doubt and anxiety in my deeds, and I am fully aware of what I am doing.”

Two letters from 'A'ishah

I would indeed be your son on condition that you abandon fighting and bloodshed.

Zayd ibn Sawhan

1-A letter to Zayd bin Sawhan[62]

at-Tabari quotes Mujalid ibn Sa'id, saying: 'A'ishah wrote to Zayd ibn Sawhan who was a virtuous scholar and a companion of the Prophet as follows:

"This is a letter from 'A'ishah daughter of Abu Bakr and wife of the Prophet to her own chaste and good son, Zayd ibn Sawhan. Dear Son! I expect every help and cooperation from you, and on the receipt of this letter hasten to us for assistance and victory. If you refuse this request, at least abandon 'Ali's side and abstain from aiding him."

Zayd answered 'A'ishah's letter as follows:[63]

"This is a letter from Zayd ibn Sawhan to 'A'ishah daughter of Abu Bakr and consort of the Prophet. 'A'ishah! I am indeed your loyal and obedient son but on condition that you abandon this dangerous action and go back home the way you have come. If you reject my suggestion and advice, I will not only be your son, but I will also be the first person to oppose and fight you."

It was in connection with this letter that Zayd ibn Sawhan uttered the following humorous and historical sentence: "May God bless 'A'ishah for her deal with us. She entrusted us with her own task of housekeeping and took over our task of fighting and jihad."

2-A letter to Hafsah

Abu Mikhnaf says: When 'A'ishah learnt of the arrival of 'Ali's army at Dhu Qar, she wrote the following letter to Hafsah 'Umar's daughter and another wife of the Prophet: "Hafsah! Glad tidings for you! 'Ali who had Left Medina with his army and arrived at Dhu Qar, on hearing about our military strength and equipment, is frightened and doubtful and does not advance one step. Today 'Ali resembles a shy and frightened horse that is so perplexed that he cannot retreat for fear of annihilation nor advance for fear of being killed."

When Hafsah received this letter, she assembled her servants, slaves and her female relatives and asked them to sing in chorus and with the accompaniment of tambourines the purport of 'A'ishah's letter. When the other women and freed girls (Banat at-Tulaqa')[64] who were opposed to 'Ali heard of this, they rushed to Hafsah's house and joined the festive party.

When Umm Kulthum 'Ali's daughter, was informed of this matter, she veiled herself and with a group of female relatives, entered in Hafsah's house incognito, and sat in a corner. After some minutes she unveiled herself, and on seeing her Hafsah was so embarrassed and ashamed that she began to express her penitence for her unworthy conduct.

Umm Kulthum said: "Hafsah! It is not unlike you and 'A'ishah to act and support each other in hostility towards my father 'Ali, in the same way that you collaborated in molesting the Prophet of God, to the extent that a chapter of the Qur'an descended in your reproach."[65]

Hafsah said: "Umm Kulthum, may God bless you. Forgive me, and reprimand me no more!" Then she gave the order to tear up 'A'ishah's letter in Umm Kulthum's presence.[66]

'Ali's army moves from Medina

Many a learned person, who is armed with the weapon of knowledge, has been thrown into the abyss of annihilation by ignorance.

Imam 'Ali

So far we have described how various parties were formed in opposition to Imam 'Ali how these groups formed a coalition and mobilized an army to fight him and how this army, called 'A'ishah's army, proceeded from Mecca to Basra and captured that city.

It is now time to visit Medina and 'Ali's army and follow its movement from Medina to Basra and see what is happening there.

When Imam 'Ali was informed of 'A'ishah's uprising and Talhah and az-Zubayr's opposition and the departure of their

army to Iraq, he ordered the Emigrants Ansar and other Muslims to assemble in the mosque of Medina, and addressing them said: "O people! 'A'ishah has raised the banner of opposition to me and mobilized an army against me and is now proceeding with that army towards Iraq. Talhah and az-Zubayr, too, have violated their pact with me and joined 'A'ishah, since Talhah is her cousin and az-Zubayr is her sister's husband. Talhah and az-Zubayr's motive in this opposition is their desire to become rulers and caliphs. If they succeed in this goal and secure that position, an intense difference is surely bound to arise between them, since each of them has the ambition to become caliph and is prepared to vanquish the other to attain this goal and destroy him. But I am sure that these two will not succeed in getting that position.

As for 'A'ishah, that camel-riding woman, I swear to God that in this journey she will not cross a desert and mountain without stepping on the path of wrong and sin. She will drag herself and her friends towards annihilation in this course. I swear to God that in this war one-third of 'A'ishah's army will be destroyed, one third will flee and the rest will become penitent.

O people! 'A'ishah is that same woman who is barked at by the dogs of al-Haw'ab (a matter that according to the Prophet's prediction is the clearest sign of her being wrong and sinful.)

As for Talhah and az-Zubayr, I swear to God that they themselves know well that they are led astray and are proceeding in the way of sin. They know for sure that they are guilty of violating their pact with me. Oh! Many a learned person who, despite being armed with the weapon of knowledge, has been thrown into the abyss of destruction by his ignorance, and his knowledge is of no use to him. May God aid us, and not leave us to ourselves!"

Then Imam 'Ali ended his speech with these words: "O people! Know that today a great mischief and sedition is afoot, and the instigator of it is that same unruly and rebellious group, of whom the Prophet of God has repeatedly spoken about and warned us of. He predicted their riot and sedition for us. O people! It is now our obligation to vanquish the rioters and rebels and remove them from the earth and from the amidst the

Muslims, and thus extinguish this mischief and sedition. Where are the sentinels of right and truth? Where are those loyal and violent men? Where are those who can distinguish right from wrong, the unjust and corrupt from the, just and honest?

O people! Did I wrong the Quraysh? What differences did I have with them to rouse the riot and rebellion against myself'? I swear to God that I will tear away the thick screens of wrong and reveal the fine visage of right from behind it. I will make the Quraysh weep and groan. Tell them nothing and let them wait as much as they desire at their misery arid ruin, and lament and weep for their unhappiness and helplessness."[67]

Thus ended the first oration of Imam 'Ali about this matter. On the second and third days, he too delivered fiery sermons at the mosque of Medina to prepare the public for a declaration of war on the last day, and after mobilizing an army he issued the order for departure from Medina.

al-Mas'udi says: 'Ali appointed Sahl ibn Hunayf al-Ansari to act in his own place in Medina in dealing with the affairs there, and departed for Iraq with seven hundred warriors. Of this number, four hundred belonged to the great veteran groups of Islam, namely the Emigrants and Ansar, and seventy of them had participated in the battle of Badr under the Prophet and were called "Badr veterans", and the rest were the Prophet's companions and friends who were greatly respected by the Muslims.

Thus 'Ali prepared his army and proceeded at first towards Mecca and then towards Iraq until they reached a spot called ar-Rabadhah.[68]

'Ali's army in ar-Rabadhah

O God! Make their plan null and void.

Imam 'Ali

Imam 'Ali and his army reached ar-Rabadhah the first halting place and stopped there for few days. 'Uthman ibn Hunayf, who had been appointed as governor of Basra by the Imam, had been seized and maltreated by the 'A'ishah's army. After he was

expelled from the city, he hastened to ar-Rabadhah and met ‘Ali there.

at-Tabari quoting Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyah, narrates this meeting of ‘Uthman with ‘Ali as follows: ‘Uthman, coming from Basra to ‘Ali, reached ‘Ali’s army at a place called ar-Rabadhah, he met the Imam without the hairs of his head and face which had been plucked out by ‘A’ishah’s soldiers, and said sorrowfully: “O Imam! On the day you dispatched me to Basra as governor I was an old man of white hair and a long beard, but today I return to you looking like a young and hairless man.”

‘Ali said: “O ‘Uthman! Be patient since God will reward you for bearing this discomfort and suffering.” Then the Imam addressed his army and said: “0 people! Talhah and az-Zubayr have violated their pledge and incited the people against me. It is surprising how they showed agreement to Abu Bakr and ‘Umar and obeyed those two caliphs, whereas they oppose me. I swear to God that these two know well, that I am not inferior to the last two caliphs.” Then ‘Ali cursed Talhah and az-Zubayr in these words: “O God! Make their plan null and void, and break up the basis of their acts! 0 God! Punish them for their deeds!”(69)

From there ‘Ali wrote a letter to his governor of Kufah, ‘Abd Allah ibn Qays, known as Abu Musa al-Ash’ari and said: “Abu Musa a number of people have violated their allegiance with me, and have put some of my friends and followers to the sword and killed them. They have kindled a big fire of riot and sedition among the Muslims and broken the pillars of peace and order. Abu Musa! You as a governor must support me in the way of right. When you have received this letter, mobilize a number of people of Kufah and dispatch them to me to aid me in this critical situation, to fight these unjust, riotous and perfidious adventurers, and put them in their place.”

In addition to this letter, ‘Ali wrote another letter to the people of Kufah asking them for their assistance. But Abu Musa paid no attention to the Imam’s letter, and not only gave no positive answer to it, but also warned the people of Kufah against helping ‘Ali. ‘Ali’s messengers returned from Kufah in disappointment. ‘Ali wrote another letter to Abu Musa severely

reproaching him and criticizing his attitude. Then ‘Ali moved his army from ar-Rabadhah, which was directed towards Mecca, and proceeded towards Iraq.[70]

‘Ali’s army in Dhu Qar

He, who comes to me and aids me, will be responding to the call of God.
Imam ‘Ali

‘Ali proceeded with his army from ar-Rabadhah and reached Dhu Qar, the next stopping place, and from there he wrote another letter to the people of Ku’fah, and gave it to his son, al-Hasan al-Mujtaba, to carry it to them and inform them of its content and rouse them for assistance.

al-Hasan departed for Kufah and read his father’s letter to them and persuaded them to offer their help. He carried out his mission well and obtained good results; for, a large number of people were influenced by his words and hastened to join ‘Ali’s army.

at-Tabari quoting Ibn Abi Layla, narrates the event as follows: ‘Ali wrote a letter to the people of Kufah stating the following points: “In the name of God. 0 people of Kufah! As I am aware of your faith and belief in God, and His prophet, I prefer you to others and in turning to you I have halted in the vicinity of your city. Any of you, who help me, will be acting upon his religious duty and will be aiding right and justice.”[71]

Abu at-Tufayl narrates that after ‘Ali had dispatched his letter to the people of Kufah predicted to us that twelve thousand and one citizens of Kufah will give him a positive answer and will rise to aid him. Abu at-Tufayl adds that the forces, which arrived from Kufah were exactly the same number that Imam ‘Ali had predicted.[72]

Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih says: When the people of Kufah who joined ‘Ali’s army reached the Dhu Qar camp, Imam Ali addressed them as follows:

“In the name of God! Infinite praise is to the God of the world and its people, and God’s perpetual praise and blessing be

upon Muhammad, the seal of all prophets! O people! On the day when mischief and sedition ruled over the world of humanity especially over the Arabs, and on the day when mankind was trampled upon under the pressure of disunion war and bloodshed; on the day when fear and anxiety were dominant everywhere, the kind and beneficent God sent His prophet, Muhammad to the people of the world. And through him, He removed all corruption and bloodshed from amongst them, and turned disunion and hypocrisy into love and loyalty, and put an end to social gaps and class differences, He granted safety and security to fearful and dangerous roads, and uprooted old rancours and enmities from the hearts. Then in His satisfaction with the Prophet's endeavors and deeds, He called him to Himself and dispatched him to the eternal world. He welcomed him there and bestowed upon him the noblest place in heaven. But with the sunset of the light of prophethood a great and terrible calamity fell upon all Muslims, the greater part of which fell upon his household and his kith and kin. After the Prophet of God Abu Bakr held the rein of public affairs, and during his rule he treated the people somewhat well, and they were relatively satisfied with him. After Abu Bakr, 'Umar succeeded him as a ruler and he followed Abu Bakr's way. After those two, 'Uthman became ruler and caliph and held the control of the Muslims' affairs, but he adopted a way, which aroused public wrath, to the extent that they decided to kill him, which they eventually did.

Then you turned to me and with your insistence and forced me to accept this position. I pressed my hands together in refusal, but you forced them open, and the farther I withdrew my hand, the harder you pulled them towards yourselves and the morel begged you to excuse me, the more you insisted upon your demand, saying: We will accept none but you for this position. You people resembled thirsty and sore-hearted camels coming upon water and crowding eagerly around it, and you rushed upon my house as if you intended an assassination. Finally I was compelled to accept your proposal and you swore allegiance to me. Talhah and az-Zubayr held my hand in allegiance to me, but not long afterwards they departed from Medina on the pretext of making a pilgrimage, but instead of

being in the House of God, they emerged in Basra where they incited riot and sedition, torturing the Muslims and killing a number of them. I swear to God that they know well that I am not inferior to the preceding caliphs."

Then the Imam added: "If I were to unveil the truth, I would speak more of this matter, and clarify certain facts." Then he looked up at heaven and said:

"O God! Be my witness that they have not observed the respect due to kinship, and have violated their pact with me, and have instigated the people with hostility towards me. 0 God! Make their plan null and void and punish them for their deeds as quickly as possible."(78)

'Ali's next speech in Dhu Qar

They are that some unruly group who swore allegiance to me and then violated it.

Imam 'Ali

The time for rest at Dhu Qar came to an end and 'Ali decided to move his army. But before departure he delivered another oration, which is quoted by Ibn 'Abd al-Barr as follows:

"O people! God has made jihad obligatory for every Muslim since jihad is the means of aiding religion and without it the affairs of this world and the next cannot be put in order. O people! Today I am faced with four people who have joined hands: Talhah s as the cleverest and most generous of all, az-Zubayr as the bravest of all people 'A'ishah as the most obeyed commander among the Muslims.

Ya'la ibn Umayyah as the most seditious and rebellious of all people.

I swear to God that their protest to me is out of place, since I have committed no wrong or improper action, and have not encroached upon Muslims' property, and have not followed my whim and fancy.

O people! They are claiming a right from me, which they themselves have destroyed, and demand from me the blood that they themselves have shed. By God, it was indeed they who

smeared their hands with ‘Uthman’s blood and I did not take the slightest part in his assassination. They are the same people whom the Prophet called tyrannical, rebellious and an unruly group.

Indeed what tyranny is higher than their murdering ‘Uthman, but they claim his blood from the innocent and from those that had nothing to do with it? What rebellion is higher than violating their pact and allegiance with me after confessing my justice and merit and swearing allegiance to me?

My only consolation of the heart is that God has left them no room for protest, and He is aware of their treacherous thoughts and intentions. I swear to God that Talhah, az-Zubayr and ‘A’ishah are fully aware that I am in the right and they are led astray. Nevertheless I will invite them to follow the right and justice, peace and conciliation. If they accept my invitation, I will pardon them and will connive at their guilt and blunder. But if they continue their unruliness and disobedience, I will respond to them with sharp swords since it is the sword, which is the greatest supporter of right and the destroyer of wrong.”(74)

‘Ali’s army at the az-Zawiyah halting-place

‘A’ishah! Fear God and return home.
Imam ‘Ali

‘Ali left Dhu Qar and reached the stopping place of az-Zawiyah near Basra and stayed there for a few days. At this point which was his third halting place and camp, certain events occurred. From here he wrote a letter to the enemy commanders in Basra, quoted by Sibt ibn al-Jawzi as follows:

“In the Name of God. This is a letter from ‘Ali, commander of the faithful, to Talhah and az-Zubayr and ‘A’ishah. Salutations to you! O Talhah and az-Zubayr, you yourselves know well that

I had no desire to be a caliph and ruler. But there was too much insistence by the people compelling me to accept this great responsibility and at last I shouldered this heavy duty and agreed to be a caliph.

You two also swore allegiance to me most willingly. Today I

interpellate and ask you why, despite your utmost willingness and option for allegiance on that day, you violate your pact and allegiance?

Fear God, and repent the sin of perfidiousness. If you swore allegiance to me unwillingly, then I have the right to protest to you, since it shows that you are hypocrites, you acted upon something in which you had no faith, thus pretending agreement with me, while you opposed me at heart.

O Talhah! Great Emigrant! 0 az-Zubayr! Warrior of the Quraysh! If you had opposed me before swearing allegiance it would have been better and nobler of you than swearing allegiance to me on that day and breaking it today.

'A'ishah! You too have disobeyed God's command and disregarded the order of your husband, the Prophet of God, since you have left your house contrary to the order of God and His prophet. You intend to undertake a task, which is not related to you, and yet you imagine that in this way you will establish peace and tranquility among the Muslims. Alas! How mistaken you are and how far from truth!

Tell me, 'A'ishah, what has a woman to do with campaigning? What place has a woman in rising to fight men? 'A'ishah! The fact is that you intend to kindle the fire of mischief and sedition amidst the Muslims and shed their innocent blood.

'A'ishah! You imagine that you have risen up to avenge 'Uthman's blood. What have you to do with 'Uthman's blood? It has nothing to do with you to claim vengeance for his blood since he belonged to the Banu Umayyah tribe and you are of the Taym tribe. Furthermore, was it not you who issued the verdict of his death yesterday and cried out: 'Kill this stupid, Jewish fellow, since he has turned away from Islam!' How is it then, that today you have risen up to avenge his blood?

'A'ishah! Fear God and return home. Do not tear away your veil of chastity!"

This was a brief account of 'Ali's letter to the commanders of 'A'ishah's army, Talhah and az-Zubayr, written from az-Zawiyah, near Basra. They read this moving, logical letter but left it unanswered.

Some historians write: 'A'ishah wrote the following answer

to ‘Ali “O son of Abu Talib. We are beyond protest and reproach and we will never obey you! Do whatever you can, and spare no effort against us!”[75]

It is stated in the history of Ibn A’tham al-Kufi that Talhah and az-Zubayr gave no written answer to ‘Ali’s letter but sent a verbal answer as follows:

“O ‘Ali! You have chosen a very hard way and consider it incumbent upon you to proceed on it. Nothing will satisfy you but in making us obedient to your command. But we shall never obey you ‘Ali! Proceed on your way and do your utmost against us!”

Anyhow Imam ‘Ali gained no result from his letter by which he wished to advise the commanders of ‘A’ishah’s army to adopt a way for the establishment of peace, and received no pacific answer. Therefore he departed with his army until he entered the city of Basra.

Dear readers, so far, the way the two opposing forces were formed, and their movements towards Basra and their entry into that city have been narrated from various history books and reliable sources. We leave the matter here, and return to the first event of the battle of al-Jamal, and narrate previous happenings for the second time on the basis of the descriptions given by Abu Mikhnaf, a well-known historian who is well-informed about the reports and conditions of Iraq, so as to confirm and clarify the previous accounts.

A letter of Talhah and az-Zubayr to the governor of Basra

Governor of Basra! Evacuate for us as quickly as possible the Governor’s house in Basra!

Talhah and az-Zubayr

The well-known historian Abu Mikhnaf[76] writes in his famous book “History of the battle of al-Jamal” Talhah az-Zubayr and ‘A’ishah hastened towards Basra until they reached Hafr Abu Musa near Basra. From there they wrote a letter to the governor of Basra, ‘Uthman ibn Hunayf, as follows:

'Uthman! We are coming to Basra! Upon our arrival evacuate and prepare the governor's house for us, and transfer the control of the city to us, and consider yourself dismissed as governor!"

'Uthman informed al-Ahnaf ibn Qays who was one of the elders of Basra and well-known for his wisdom of the purport of the letter, and said to him: "al-Ahnaf Talhah and az-Zubayr's army has reached the vicinity of Basra and the Prophet's consort, too, is with them and for her sake the people from every direction will join that army. What is your opinion on this matter?" al-Ahnaf said: " 'Uthman! These are the same individuals who instigated the Muslims against 'Uthman and shed his blood. Today they are turning to us without shame to claim from Us 'Uthman's blood. With such an intention if they enter our city, they will create division and hostility among the citizens and will put us all to the sword and kill us. 'Uthman! You are the governor of this city and the people are obedient to you. Make use of your strong position and declare war, and attack the enemy with a number of Basra warriors. For if they are given the opportunity to enter Basra the people will obey them and disobey you!"

'Uthman said: "al-Ahnaf! I too, realize that our policy is to rise and fight. But what can I do? I fear riot and sedition and have no desire to start it with my own hand. I wish for peace and tranquility, and I can take no step until I receive 'Ali's instruction."

After al-Ahnaf Hakim ibn Jabalah came to 'Uthman and informed him of the content of the letter of 'A'ishah's army commanders. Hakim confirmed al-Ahnafs suggestion and encouraged 'Uthman to rise up and fight 'Aishah's army, but he met with the same response that al-Ahnaf had received. When Hakim found his suggestion to be of no avail, he said:"O Uthman! If you are not prepared to rise and fight permit me to rise up against, them with the members of my tribe. If I succeed in forcing them to surrender to Imam 'Ali and bring them under his command and allegiance, all the better, but if they show no submission we will fight them without asking for your help."

'Uthman said: "Hakim, I have no fear of war and death to dissuade me from fighting or to leave you alone. But. I am on

principle against fighting the Muslims and opposed to mischief and sedition. Otherwise I would heartily favour combat and take the lead in this matter."

Hakim said: "Yes, peace and tranquility are good, but I swear to God that you are well aware that if they enter Basra they will win public support and dismiss you from your position:'

But however much Hakim insisted upon a combat, 'Uthman did not yield to his proposal.

Imam 'Ali's letter to his governor of Basra

No one is worthier than 'Ali for the caliphate.
az-Zubayr

Imam 'Ali was in ar-Rabadhah when he learnt of the arrival of 'A'ishah's army at the vicinity of Basra. So he wrote the following letter to his governor of that city: "This, is a letter from the servant of God, 'Ali commander of the faithful, to his governor 'Uthman bin Hunayf. Unjust and unruly individuals, who have concluded a pact with God and then violated it, are now turning against you! Satan has made them so proud and deceived them so much that they proceeded contrary to God's satisfaction, but God's punishment is more painful and His scourge of vengeance is severer and more smashing! 'Uthman invite those who have entered Basra towards obedience to the existing government and to the fulfillment of their pact with me. If you receive a positive and pacific answer, it is incumbent upon you to show them respect, but if they refuse and insist upon their opposition, then fight them, until God judges between you and them, the Just God governs with justice. I have written this letter in ar-Rabadhah, and with God's aid I myself will soon join you. The scribe of the letter is 'Ubayd Allah ibn Abi Rafi'(77). Dated the 36th of Hijrah.

Abu Mikhnaf says: When .'Uthman received 'Ali's letter, he summoned two distinguished persons, namely Abu al-Aswad ad-Du'ali(78) and 'Imran ibn Hasin and commissioned them to

contact ‘A’ishah’s army commanders and investigate the cause and purpose of their uprising.

Abu al-Aswad and Imran visited the camp of ‘A’ishah’s army at Hafr Abu Musa at first they got in touch with ‘A’ishah, discussing the matter and offering counsel. ‘A’ishah said: “You had better see Talhah and az-Zubayr and discuss the matter with them, too.”

Abu al-Aswad and Imran went to az-Zubayr and talked with him. az-Zubayr said: “We have two objectives in this uprising of ours:

1-To avenge ‘Uthman’s blood and kill his assassins.

2-’Ali must abdicate as caliph, to be replaced by someone else on the vote of the Muslims’ council.”

They answered: “As for avenging ‘Uthman’s blood, it is not the people of Basra who have killed him to become liable for his blood az-Zubayr! You know well yourself who and where his assassins are! You and your friend Talhah and ‘A’ishah who have hoisted the banner of vengeance today, were the most stubborn enemies of ‘Uthman, and it was you who persuaded people to kill him! As for ‘Ali’s abdication how can you depose him from his position as caliph and deprive him of his indisputable right when you have welcomed him with open arms and sworn allegiance to him, and when there did not exist the slightest disinclination? az-Zubayr! It is really surprising that on the day the Prophet departed this life and the people swore allegiance to Abu Bakr you refused to do so, and raising your sword exclaimed that no one is worthier and heritable than ‘Ali to be caliph. But today you oppose him in this manner! Where is that friendship and support; and why this opposition and hostility?”

When az-Zubayr found himself condemned in the presence of ‘Uthman ibn Hunayfs envoys and had no answer to give to their protests, he said: “You had better talk to Talhah too and hear what he says.”

Abu al-Aswad and ‘Imran went to Talhah and found him to be a very hard and seditious man who had no purpose but to kindle the fire of war and mischief. So they returned in disappointment to ‘Uthman and informed him of what had passed. Abu al-Aswad, too, composed a poem on this occasion

the translation of which is as follows:

"O son of *Hunayf knows that the enemy's army has no goal but war!*
You, *too, should rise and stand up and get ready to fight them!*
Endeavors hard to pound those people and show perseverance in your way!
We talked with az-Zubayr and found no flexibility in his tal;
But Talhah was even sharper and was proceeding on the wrong path!
His remoteness from peace resembled the distance between heaven and- earth!
Their best words were ugly sharp and seditious.
They threatened us violently but their threat was very trifling and worthless to us.
"(79)

When Abu al-Aswad finished reciting his poem, 'Uthman ibn Hunayf was deeply impressed by it and said: "Yes! I swear to the two holy cities (Mecca and Medina) that I will fight these people as you have suggested."

Then he ordered a general mobilization and the slogan of "Get ready for war" echoed in Basra. The people armed themselves and surrounded their governor 'Uthman ibn Hunayf.

The Basrans army moved towards al-Mirbad, which was one of the large squares of Basra where 'A'ishah's army had encamped, and the two forces came face to face in the same square.

Fiery speeches

Be aware, O people, that 'Uthman was killed in his innocence! Now seize his assassins!

A man of the Banu Jashm tribe speaks

The forces of Basra and 'A'ishah's army faced each other in al-Mirbad square. A man of the Banu Jashm tribe arose from among the Basra forces and after introducing himself addressed the people of Basra, saying: "O people! These men have come

from Mecca to confront you, not in fear of insecurity and flight from chaos, since they live in a city which is a safe place of refuge for everyone, and where all creatures over joy peace and tranquility, and where even wild birds, animals and beasts are safe against injury by human beings. So they have not come here for fear, but to avenge 'Uthman's blood, rushing like a destructive torrent upon our city, whereas. We people of Basra had no share in 'Uthman's murder. O people! Listen to me and send back this army the same way they came! If you fail to show such valor and courage. Such a fire of war will be kindled among you that it will never be extinguished, and its flames will swallow all your lives and existence."

When the man uttered his last phrase, a number of the Basra people threw stones at him and silenced him.

Talhah speaks

Abu Mikhnaf says: After the remark of that man of the Banu Jashm tribe. Talhah stood up and silencing the noise and uproar of the people, which echoed in the square said: "O people of Basra! You all know that 'Uthman ibn-Affan was a noble and virtuous man who had a fine and brilliant record in Islam. He belonged to the same group of the Emigrants about whom the verse of ar-Ridwan descended, of the same Emigrants with whom God was pleased, and of whose excellence and personality the Qur'an has spoken of. Yes, 'Uthman was of the group of Emigrants and a friend of Prophet's and Muslim leaders. But he changed his ways at the end of the period of his caliphate, and sometimes diverted from the course of justice. We warned him of this and protested to him. He accepted our words and expressed repentance, and once more resumed the course of justice, but of what use?

That man, who is now usurping the rein of the Muslims' affairs without their satisfaction and knowledge, rushed upon him and killed him in his innocence. A number of corrupt and bold people, too, assisted him in this unjust action. 'Uthman was indeed respected by all Muslims and was killed innocently.

O people of Basra! We have come here to avenge the blood of that chaste and innocent man, and seize his assassins and kill them, so that the Muslims may recover their lost authority and

independence, and elect through a council a caliph for themselves. For, governing and caliphate are the right of all people, the person who has seized this position by force and bullying, is will shake and collapse.”

az-Zubayr speaks

After Talhah, az-Zubayr stood up and began to speak. Like Talhah, he, too, spoke of ‘Uthman’s innocence and accused ‘Ali of being his assassin, and confirmed everything that Talhah had stated.

Here a number of the people of Basra arose, and protesting to az-Zubayr, said explicitly: “Talhah! az-Zubayr! Was it not you who swore allegiance to ‘Ali and concluded the pact of submission to him? Why did you swear allegiance to him yesterday, and violate your pact to day?”

They said in answer: “We did not swear allegiance willingly, and were forced to do so, and thus no one has the right of allegiance and obedience from us so as to protest and charge us of perfidy.”

Here intense differences arose among the people of Basra and there ensued a great uproar; for, a number who supported Talhah and az-Zubayr confirmed their claims saying: “They are right! They are right!” While another group refuted their words and said that these two are telling lies and are sly and cunning in their claims.

‘A’li shah speaks

Abu Mikhnaf says: The arguments and. uproar of the people went on for a long time until ‘A’ishah intervened to calm them down. She mounted her camel and stopped in front of them. and addressing them in a loud voice, said: “O people That is enough! Stop talking and be silent! silent”

When they hear her words, they became quiet and ended their argument-mg. When silence reigned once more in the square of al-Mirbad, she began to speak and said to the people of Basra: ‘O people! ‘Uthman as emir of the faithful had deviated from the course of right and justice and molested the companions of the Prophet. He brought corrupt and inexperienced youths to power, and patronized wicked and

perverse individuals who were subjected to the wrath of the Prophet and banished by him. The Muslims protested to him and warned him of the serious consequences of his deeds. He, in his turn, accepted the people's advice and counsel, and expressed regret for his ugly acts and washed away his polluted past with the water of repentance, and cleansed himself from his sins and blunders. However, a number of people killed him without paying attention to his repentance, and shed the blood of that chaste and innocent man. By his death they committed several sins: they assassinated him like a sacrifice camel while he was dressed in the sacred garment of caliphate, in the sacred month of Dhu al-Hijjah when war and blood shed is forbidden, and in the city of Medina, the respect for which is incumbent upon all in Islam!

Know, O people! With 'Uthman's murder the Quraysh made themselves the target of their own arrows, and smeared themselves with his blood with their own hands. 'Uthman's death did not bring them any closer to their goal and it was of no avail to them. By God! Such a calamity will descend upon them that it will annihilate them, a fire-raising and destructive calamity, a calamity that will awaken the sleepers and make the sitters leap up! 0 people! Firstly 'Uthman's guilt was not such as to deserve death, and secondly you made him repent, and then without paying attention to his repentance, you rushed upon him and shed his innocent blood. Then you swore allegiance to 'Ali and made him usurp the seat of caliphate.(80)

Do you suppose that I should be angry in your interest to wards 'Uthman's whips and abuses, but that I should refrain from anger and remain silent in 'Uthman's interest for the strokes of swords that you brought down upon him?

O people! Know that 'Uthman was killed innocently, and it is now up to you to find his murderers wherever they are and kill them. Then, through the council you can choose as caliph one of those who had been nominated by 'Umar. But none of 'Uthman's assassins should participate in the council for the election of the caliph or have the smallest share.

Abu Mikhnaf says: When 'A'ishah ended this oration, the people arose like a wave in uproar. Someone said: "What 'A'ishah said is true." Another charged 'A'ishah with error,

saying that she had no right to leave her house. A third person said: "It is not for her to interfere in social matters." Thus each person had something to say and the noise and uproar of the people became so loud that disputes were started. People started hitting each other throwing dust and pebbles at each other.

Thus the people of Basra were divided into two distinct groups, arraying themselves in two opposite fronts. One group supported 'Uthman ibn Hunayf, as governor of Basra, and another group showed sympathy to 'A'ishah, and thus with her brief oration she was able to win some public support and add a number of soldiers to her army.

The first battle

O God! Be a witness that I offered every argument to these two!
Governor of Basra

Abu Mikhnaf says: The incidents in al-Mirbad came to an end and the people scattered, but Talhah and az-Zubayr took a number of soldiers with them to go and arrest 'Uthman ibn Hunayf and seize Dar al-Imarah (the governor's house) in the center of the city. But they were faced with stubborn resistance by 'Uthman's forces who were familiar with the locality, and who before the raid by 'A'ishah's army they had taken control-of all streets and alleys and used them as barricades.

When 'A'ishah's army was unable to advance to the center of the city, they changed their course towards the gardens and squares of the city. But the army of Basra blocked their way, and a hard battle took place between the two forces. In this clash, Hakim ibn Jabalah and members of his tribe fought most valiantly and attacked 'A'ishah's army inflicting a severe defeat on them and driving them back as far as the Banu Mazin cemetery. Here 'A'ishah's army took a defensive position until a reinforcement of cavalry arrived form the main camp to aid them, and the defeated force under the protection of the cavalry moved by the Basra dam towards az-Zabuqah (outside the city)

and from there to a marshy desert called Dar ar-Rizq and encamped there. Thus in the first battle the governor of Basra won victory and drove back ‘A’ishah’s army.

Abu Mikhnaf continues to say: ‘Abd Allah ibn Hakim who was a chief of the Tamim tribe and had already been written to by Talhah and az-Zubayr about ‘Uthman’s assassination, asking his aid in their rebellion against ‘Uthman, came to Talhah, and showed him the letters and said: “Talhah! Was it not you who wrote us these letters inciting us to kill ‘Uthman?”

Talhah said: “Yes, these letters are from us.” ‘Abd Allah said:
“Talhah! It is amazing that yesterday you encouraged us in these letters to kill ‘Uthman and you eventually killed him with your own hands, whereas today you have come to us claiming to avenge his blood. Talhah! I swear to God that you have no goal but this world and to have a worldly position, wrong motivation has made you rise up and start war and bloodshed. Other wise, why was it that yesterday you swore allegiance to ‘Ali and did so most willingly, whereas to day you oppose him and violate your pact with him. Worst of all you have come to start riot and mischief in our city and make us your accomplices in this sedition.”

Talhah said: “ ‘Abd Allah! My allegiance to ‘Ali was not based on willingness. When the people swore allegiance to ‘Ali, he invited me to follow their example and I was compelled to take his hand in allegiance. If I had refused his call, in addition to being deprived of the right of election as caliph, I would also have lost my life, since the people would have risen up against me and destroyed me.”

Abu Mikhnaf says: Thus ended the first day, the next day both sides got ready for combat and arrayed themselves for battle. Here ‘Uthman ibn Hunayf and a number of his friends went to Talhah and az-Zubayr and began to advise them and warn them of the serious consequences of division and violating a pact. But Talhah and az-Zubayr, without taking his advice, said openly: “O son of Hunayf! We have come here to avenge ‘Uthman’s blood and nothing can stop us in this purpose.”

‘Uthman ibn Hunayf said: “What have you to do with ‘Uthman’s blood? His sons and cousins have priority over you in avenging his death. Where are they? I swear to God that your

vengeance is nothing but a pretext. The truth, is that you had desired the position of caliph and ruler, and did your utmost to secure it, but the Muslims paid no attention to you and favored 'Ali. Thus you are filled with rancor and enmity towards 'Ali and you are being burnt by the flames of envy, all of which have led you to opposition and perfidy, resorting to the pretext of avenging 'Uthman's blood in order to cover up your envy and hostility. For, you took the lead in inciting the people against 'Uthman and you criticized him more violently than anyone else."

At these words of 'Uthman ibn Hunayf both Talhah and az-Zubayr began to abuse and insult him savagely and even defamed his mother's name shamefully.

'Uthman looked at az-Zubayr and said: "What can I say? Your mother Safiyah had a kinship with the Prophet and so for his sake I must be excused of mentioning her name." Then he glanced at Talhah and said: "O Talhah son of Sa'bah! Your account with me is higher than the use of words; only the sword can settle it and I will punish you for your obscene insults."

Then 'Uthman looked up towards heaven and said: "O God! Be a witness that I offered every argument to these two and left no room for any excuses." Saying this he attacked them and thus declared war. A hard battle ensued between the two forces, and after much fighting and blood shed both sides agreed to conclude a peace agreement and put and to the fighting.

Peace and a peace treaty

Both armies concluded a pact with God to act upon what they had written.
Peace treaty

As we mentioned in the last chapter, a severe battle took place between the two sides in their first confrontation, ending with the death of a number, and the victory of the governor of Basra and his forces.

Abu Mikhnaf says: After this combat (which we have called the first battle) the commanders of both armies agreed to

conclude a peace treaty on certain conditions and write them down in order to cease fighting until the arrival of ‘Ali. Thus this treaty was drawn up and signed by the commanders of both sides.

The text of the treaty which consisted of five articles, was as follows:

“This is a treaty concluded by ‘Uthman ibn Hunayf and his friends with Talhah and az-Zubayr and their supporters, both sides bind themselves to act up on its terms and respect them.

1-Neither side has the right to molest the other or disturb their peace and tranquility.

2-Both sides have the right of natural and social benefits and each side can equally make use of rivers, public pastures, roads, streets and Muslim markets to meet their needs, without molestation by the other side.

3-’Uthman ibn Hunayf will be in charge of disciplinary and administrative affairs of the city, the governor’s palace, mosque and congregation prayer matters, and have control of the public funds, as he had before.

4-Talhah and az-Zubayr will have the freedom of residence in Basra, and they can, without any hindrance choose a site for their camps and dwell freely in any part of the city they wish.

5-This treaty is valid and enforceable as of this date ‘until the arrival of ‘Ali in Basra, and after ‘Ali’s arrival Talhah and az-Zubayr are free either to act loyally in their allegiance to ‘Ali or to choose between peace and war.”

The following phrase was added at the end of the peace treaty: “Both sides bound themselves to act upon the terms of the treaty in the same way that a pact is concluded by the prophets with God, and thus they made their treaty stronger and firmer.”

The peace treaty was signed by both sides and peace and tranquility were restored ‘Uthman ibn Hunayf took his forces from Dar ar-Rizq, where war and peace had been made, to the city Dar al-Imarah, and ordered his followers to lay down their weapons and return to their homes to rest and look after the wounded.

The second battle

O friends of the Prophet! Do you not fear God?
Muslims

For the second time Talhah and az-Zubayr violate their pact

The Basrans army fully observed the terms of the cease-fire and peace treaty, and the city of Basra once more regained its prewar tranquility and normal conditions.

But Talhah and az-Zubayr soon violated their peace treaty in the same way that they had violated their allegiance with ʿAli. They came to the conclusion when ʿAli arrived within a few days, they could not stand up against him with their small number and inadequate equipment, since ʿAli possessed a greater number and better equipment.(81)

So these two spent a wakeful night discussing the steps to be taken. At last they decided to break their promise in the same way that they had violated their pact with ʿAli and secretly ask the chiefs of Arab tribes and Basrans leaders to help and cooperate with them.

Therefore Talhah and az-Zubayr wrote letters to the above personalities, inviting them to avenge ʿUthman's blood, depose ʿAli from office and expel the governor from Basra.

The tribes of al-Azd, Dabbah and Qays ʿAylan gave positive answers to this call and swore allegiance to them promising help. Only a few people of these three tribes disagreed, and withdrew into concealment.

Talhah and az-Zubayr sent another letter to Hilal ibn Waki', chief of the Banu Tamim tribe inviting him to collaborate, but he sent no answer and abstained from meeting them. So they decided to visit Hilal themselves. But he refused to admit them and concealed himself. His mother protested and reproached him saying: "Hilal! It is disgraceful of such a personality as you to hide him from such distinguished guests and refuse to see two great Quraysh personalities." She kept on talking until he yielded and opened his door to Talhah and az-Zubayr and sat down to discuss matters with them. He was finally sufficiently influenced by their arguments and by their insistence so that he

agreed to swear allegiance to them and promise them help and collaboration. Then the two houses of Banu ‘Amr and Banu Hanzalah which were two great branches of the Tamim tribe followed Hilal ibn Waki’ their chief, and swore allegiance to Talhah and az-Zubayr.

Of the Tamim tribe only the house of Banu Yarbu’ who were true and loyal friends of Imam ‘Ali refused to join the others in allegiance and also the house of Banu Daram who were another branch of Banu Tamim. In this way Talhah and az-Zubayr managed to win the support of most of the Basrans tribes.

The second battle begins

When the commanders of ‘A’ishah’s army found out that they were superior in men, weapons and strength they gave the orders on one cold, dark, windy rainy night for the men to conceal their weapons under their garments and proceed toward the Jami’ Mosque. They arrived there right at the time of the morning prayer.

At that moment ‘Uthman ibn Hunayf was at the altar and about to begin the congregational prayer. The companions of Talhah and az-Zubayr went forward and dragged him away from the altar and put az-Zubayr in his place. The public fund guards on hearing what was happening in the mosque, hastened to aid ‘Uthman, and dragged az-Zubayr out of the altar and replaced ‘Uthman there. But az-Zubayr’s companions once more pulled away ‘Uthman and then replaced him by az-Zubayr. The guards rushed in for the second time and brought ‘Uthman back to the altar and drove away az-Zubayr. This dispute about who would be the leader of the congregational prayer lasted so long that the time for prayer was about to expire. The congregation raised their voices from every side, shouting: “O Muslims! Fear God, the sun is rising! O friends of the Prophet! Fear the wrath of God, for, the time for prayer is almost over!”

After all these struggles, as az-Zubayr’s companions were better prepared and more determined. They won the field and captured the altar and az-Zubayr acted as leader of the prayer, at once he ordered the arrest of ‘Uthman ibn Hunayf. His companions pulled out their hidden swords and attacked

‘Uthman’s followers and after a brief clash between Marwan and ‘Uthman, az-Zubayr’s followers captured ‘Uthman and the public fund guards who numbered seventy, they beat and tortured ‘Uthman so savagely that he nearly died there. They plucked out the hairs of his head and face and even his eyebrows and eyelash.

Thus victory was won by ‘A’ishah’s army in this conflict, which took place after the conclusion of the peace treaty, and Basra came under their control.

An account of the war prisoners

O commander of the faithful! I went away as an old man and now I return as a youth!

Governor of Basra

Abu Mikhnaf says: Contrary to the peace terms ‘A’ishah’s army raided the governor’s house and the Muslim treasury, they took the governor of Basra and the public fund guards as prisoners. They were taken to ‘A’ishah for her to issue a verdict and decide what should be done with them. ‘A’ishah declared her decision about them as follows:

The fate of the guards

‘A’ishah issued the following verdict about the guards: She summoned az-Zubayr and said: “These are the men who have drawn their swords against you and have defended ‘Uthman ibn Hunayf and the public funds. I leave it to you to put them to the sword, and thus to their death.”

Abu Mikhnaf says: Upon this order az-Zubayr, aided by his son ‘Abd Allah, beheaded these men like sheep and placed their bodies in a row.

He says: In addition to these seventy men who came to aid ‘Uthman another number had stayed to defend the treasury and refused to surrender it to Talhah and az-Zubayr. But az-Zubayr attacked them at night and after scattering them captured the treasury, and arrested fifty more of the guards and beheaded them cruelly in the people’s presence and lay their

bodies alongside the other seventy.

Abu Mikhnaf says: According to Saq'ab ibn Zuhayr the number of the guards who were killed on that day reached four hundred. He adds: the first trick which occurred in Islam was the trick played by Talhah and az-Zubayr upon 'Uthman ibn Hunayf, and the first group of innocent Muslims who were cruelly killed publicly were the guards of Basra. This was the tragic fate of the guards of the public treasury.

Abu Mikhnaf says again: After dispersing or arresting the guards, the forces of Talhah and az-Zubayr entered the treasury, and on seeing all the gold, silver and riches, az-Zubayr joyfully recited this verse of the Qur'an concerning the spoils of war:

"Allah promised you many acquisitions which you will take, then He hastened on this one for you and held back the hands of men from you, that it may be a sign for the believers."(82)

Then he added: "We deserve all this wealth more than the people of Basra." At once his soldiers began to pillage and plunder and carry everything away that was in the treasury. But on the day that Imam 'Ali won victory he returned all the public property back and divided it among the Muslims.

The fate of the governor of Basra

Abu Mikhnaf narrates as follows what happened to 'Uthman ibn fiunayf, governor of Basra: They took him to 'A'ishah who summoned Aban son of 'Uthman ibn 'Affan and ordered him to behead 'Uthman in revenge for the murder of his father. As a justification for such a verdict she said that though 'Uthman ibn Hunayf was not concerned in the murder of 'Uthman ibn 'Affan he was still one of the Ansar and the Ansar had a share in his assassination. Therefore, the death of any of the Ansar is permissible in retaliation. When 'Uthman found himself within one step of death, he addressed 'A'ishah and her friends and said: "You know that my brother Sahl ibn Hunayf is the governor of Medina, and if you kill me I swear to God that he will not keep quiet and will put to the sword all the members of your household and tribe to avenge me, and will leave none of you alive. Fear God, and think of the abjectness and misery of your house, and the serious consequences of my death."

‘Uthman’s words produced the desired effect, and fearing Sahl’s retaliation, they decide to forego ‘Uthman’s execution.

Abu Mikhnaf says: After conniving at ‘Uthman’s death, the commanders of ‘A’ishah’s army set him free from prison and allowed him either to remain in Basra or to leave to join ‘Ali’s army. ‘Uthman chose the second alternative and left Basra traveling until he reached Imam ‘Ali’s army. When he saw the Imam, tears flowed from his eyes and he said: “0 commander of the faithful! On the day that I left your presence I was a white-haired old man, whereas today I look like a young man with no hair at all.”

Imam ‘Mi was so moved and vexed at this treatment given to ‘Uthman by the enemies that involuntarily he said: “We are from God and we return to Him”, a phrase which is used in the time of uneasiness and calamity, and he repeated it three times.

The third battle

This battle is called the small battle of al-Jamal
Abu Mikhnaf

Upon the first days of ‘A’ishah’s army’s arrival in Basra, some violent clashes took place between them and ‘Uthman ibn Hunayfs forces in which a large number of Muslims were killed, and it all ended with the signing of a peace treaty. But very soon Talhah and az-Zubayr violated the peace treaty, and in raiding the governor’s palace and treasury, they caused another battle which ended in the expulsion of ‘Ali’s governor from Basra and the death of his guards. But this was followed by a third clash, which we will describe below.

When Hakim ibn Jabalah learnt of the arrest and expulsion of ‘Uthman and the death of the guards, he and three hundred men of his tribe prepared themselves for a fight and moved to towards ‘A’ishah’s army and so ‘A’ishah mounted her camel to face the opponents with her army. A hard battle took place historians call the Small al-Jamal, while ‘Ali’s battle with them is called the Great al-Jamal.

During the combat a man of the al-Azd tribe attacked Hakjm ibn Jabalah and with his sword cut off one of his legs. Hakim picked up his own severed leg and threw it violently at the man and knocked him down. Then he dragged himself towards the man and threw himself on him and suffocated him under his own heavy body. Hakim himself, too, was passing through his last moments of life when a man happening to pass by asked him whom had brought down such a calamity upon him. Hakjm said: "This man who is acting as my cushion!" The passer-by looked down and noticed the corpse of the al-Azdi fellow under Hakim's half-dead body. Thus valiant Hakim met his death as a martyr in the way of right and truth.

Abu Mikhnaf says: All of Hakim's followers who were three hundred in number were killed including his three brothers. So the third battle ended with the victory of 'A'ishah's army and Basra came under their complete control. At this time all the fighters of Basra including those who had fought 'A'ishah's army surrendered and joined her army.

Internal differences

Talhah and az-Zubayr began to dispute over the question of acting as leader of the congregational prayer.

Ibn Abi al-Hadid

When 'Uthman ibn Hunayf was driven out of Basra and Hakim ibn Jabalah and his followers were killed, the city of Basra went completely under the control of Talhah and az-Zubayr. Now, no more disputes could be expected, but as it happened, internal differences produced clashes. Each of these two commanders tried to act as leader of the congregational prayer, while the other one refused to stand behind his colleague to perform the prayer, since such a submission meant giving priority to the other. Differences rose high and reached a dangerous point until 'A'ishah herself intervened, settling the matter by making both Talhah and az-Zubayr to temporarily lay aside their claim of acting as leader of the congregational prayer, and by allowing

their sons instead to act as prayer leader. Each one was to take turns, one day for Muhammad son of Talhah, and the next day for 'Abd Allah son of az-Zubayr.

But Ibn Abi al-Hadid, the al-Mu'tazili scholar says: To remove differences between Talhah and az-Zubayr 'A'ishah ordered that 'Abd Allah son of az-Zubayr should act as provisional prayer leader until she should reach her provisional prayer leader until she should reach her final decision after the ultimate victory and then choose one of those two to act as the permanent caliph and ruler.

Another dispute

Another difference arose between Talhah and az-Zubayr about the right of each to the title of Emir so as to be addressed and greeted by the people.

Abu Mikhnaf says in connection with these matters that historians have differed some say that as 'A'ishah had made az-Zubayr Emir of the army, she addressed only him as Emir, other historians state that the title of Emir was used for both Talhah and az-Zubayr in addressing and greeting them.[83]

Letters and messages

az-Zubayr! What factor changed your friendship into hostility.

Imam'Ali

at-Tabari says: When 'Ali ibn Abn Talib heard of the movement of 'A'ishah's army, he left Medina with his forces for az-Zawiyah and from there towards Basra. 'A'ishah's army, too, were informed of 'Ali's movement and went forward from Basra to face them. They both reached a point which later came to be called 'the palace of 'Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad", and arrayed themselves facing one another.

On the first three days no clashes took place between the two armies, and during this time only *'Ali* sent letters of ultimatum to 'A'ishah's army or sent envoys to them or made direct contact with them. He made every possible endeavour to prevent

fighting and bloodshed by dissuading them from mischief and sedition. [84]

A letter to Talhah and az-Zubayr

at-Tabari confines himself to the above account and does not give the texts of the ultimatums and negotiations. But parts of these letters and talks have been quoted by Ibn Qutaybah, Ibn A'tham and Sayyid ar-Radi. Among the letters written by Imam 'Ali in those days to Talhah and az-Zubayr, is a letter carried by 'Imran ibn Hasin to them, the text of which is as follows:

"After praising God and greeting His prophet, O Talhah! And O az-Zubayr! You know well, despite your concealing the truth, that I did not seek public favour and had no desire for their allegiance. It was the people who sought me and desired to swear allegiance to me. I did not offer my hand until they offered theirs in allegiance. You two came to me without being invited and concluded a pact of allegiance with me. I had no power to compel public allegiance through fear, and they volunteered to come forward for this pact and chose me for this position. If you two have willingly sworn allegiance to me, then you can come back as soon as possible and express regret of your treachery, and repent your guilt and sin. But if your allegiance was based on unwillingness and you really intended disobedience and sin, them you exposed yourself to protest and blame by this action. For, why did you resort to simulation to pretend having faith when there was no compulsion for it, and adopt the way of hypocrisy? As for your dissimulation, I swear to God that it is nothing but a futile pretext for, others who are weaker than you and lower in power and position, had a greater right over you for fear and dissimulation, but they never speak of dissimulation and do not break their promise. Your excuse for this breach of faith and your pretext for war and bloodshed is to accuse me of 'Uthman's murder and exonerate yourselves.

To clarify the truth it would be fitting to make an inquiry of those who have kept aloof from me and you and of those who take neither your side nor mine, and when they name the assassins of 'Uthman, then those who are guilty, are liable to punishment in proportion to their guilt and their share in this crime.

Therefore O Talhah and 0 az-Zubayr! You two old men! Come away from this wrong and dangerous decision and a bend such adventures and pretexts and abstain from war and bloodshed!

Talhah! az-Zubayr! Today you are only afraid of shame and disgrace, but if you do not take my advice, tomorrow on resurrection day that shame and disgrace will be your share in addition to the fire of hell!"[85]

A message to az-Zubayr

In addition to the letter written to Talhah and az-Zubayr, Imam 'Ali dispatched his cousin 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas especially to az-Zubayr and before leaving gave him the following instruction!

'Abd Allah! In this mission you must not meet Talhah since he is a conceited, selfish and inflexible man! He is an extremely wicked and mischievous man, who resembles a bull has its horns ready to tear up the belly of every passer-by, He is so ignorant that he regards every hard and dangerous task to be easy.

'Abd Allah! You must get in touch with az-Zubayr, since he is somewhat milder and patient. In your meeting tell him: 'Ali son of your uncle says: O az-Zubayr! How was it that you recognized me in Hejaz and swore allegiance, but in Iraq you forgot me and resorted to estrangement? az-Zubayr! How was it that you altered your former way, and turned your old affection to me onto enmity and perfidy?"[86]

Ibn 'Asakir adds a point here and says: 'Ali sent a message to az-Zubayr, saying: "O az-Zubayr! Did you not swear allegiance to me willingly on that day? What has made you consider shedding my blood legitimate today and regard the combat with me as something obligatory and a definite duty for yourself?"

Ibn 'Abbas says: I carried out my mission and delivered 'Ali's message to az-Zubayr, but he only uttered a vague sentence in answer, saying: "We are in fear, but we cherish the desire to be caliphs."

Again Ibn 'Abbas says: Before az-Zubayr began to speak, az-Zubayr's son who took part in our talk, turned to me and said:

"Tell 'Ali that there are several questions between you and us.

We claim ‘Uthman’s blood from you. We want you to give the choice of the Caliph to a council in the way adopted by the second caliph and retire yourself. We say two members of the council appointed by the second caliph, namely Ialhah and az-Zubayr, are in agreement whereas you are in the minority and the majority of the Muslims and Umm al-Mu’minin ‘A’ishah favour us in their votes and view. For these reasons in the question of caliphate you do not have the slightest right or expectation.”[(87)]

The sharp-witted scholar, Ibn ‘Abbas says: On receiving that answer from ‘Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr I realized that they had no intention for peace and that their only goal was war and bloodshed. So I returned to ‘Ali and informed him of the matter.

‘A’ishah’s message

Once more *‘Ali* summoned ‘Abd Allah Ibn ‘Abbas and dispatched him to ‘A’ishah in the company of Zayd ibn Sawhan and instructed them to deliver the following message: “‘A’ishah! God’s order to you is to stay in your house till death, and never leave it. But what can I do? A number of people have deceived and taken you out of your house, and made you harmonious and unanimous with them in the attainment of their goal, and as a result of your collaboration with them a number of Muslims have gone astray and exposed themselves to danger and destruction, and are involved with an ill-omened fate. ‘A’ishah! You must return home from here and keep away from war and bloodshed among the Muslims. ‘A’ishah! Take care! If you do not return home and if you do not extinguish the fire of disunion that you have kindled, there will follow a fiery and destructive war which will swallow a large number of people.

‘A’ishah! Your responsibility is very heavy! Fear the wrath of God! And repent this great sin! God accepts the repentance of His servants, and pardons their sins. ‘A’ishah let not your kinship with Talhah and your affection for ‘Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr drag you towards the fire of hell, and let not family prejudice lead you to the punishment of hell.”[(88)]

This was a brief account along with samples of the letters and messages sent by Imam ‘Ali to prevent war and bloodshed, and to put an end to all excuses and pretexts by the

commanders of ‘A’ishah’s army.

Answers of Talhah and ‘A’ishah

‘Ali’s envoys went to ‘A’ishah and delivered his message. ‘A’ishah said in answer: “I will not talk to ‘Ali, nor give an answer to his message; for, I do not possess ‘Ali’s fluent power of speech nor his eloquence, and I cannot resist him in this.”

‘Ali’ s envoys returned to him and repeated the words of ‘A’ishah.(89)

Some historians say that Talhah said to his followers: “Rush upon ‘Ali’s army, and pay no attention to the words of his envoys! For you do not possess the power of controlling your mind and keeping your own beliefs against the eloquence of ‘Ali. So you are likely to be quickly influenced by his words and lose your own ideas and opinions.”(90)

Thus Talhah resorted to sophistry and false reasoning to answer ‘Ali’s logical words.

Inciting declarations

Defend your women and children.

‘Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr

‘Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr says:

As already mentioned, in those three days when the armies of ‘Ali and ‘A’ishah were facing each other ready for combat, ‘Ali wished to employ every possible means to extinguish the fire of riot and war. But unlike ‘Ali ‘A’ishah’s army invited the people to fight and used fiery and inciting words for this purpose.

One of these inciting orations was delivered by ‘Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr to rouse his army, in which he said: “O people! Be alert! ‘Ali son of Abu Talib has killed ‘Uthman, the rightful caliph, and today he has mobilized a fully equipped army against you, intending to vanquish you and hold the rein of your affairs, and conquer your city. You must concentrate your forces and fight valiantly, and defend your land and home against the invasion and encroachment of ‘Ali and his army, and protect your honour and independence and your women and children.

O people of Basra! How can you submit to such an abasement and abjectness as to allow the people of Kufah to invade your home and drive you out of your city and land? O people! Rise and show anger to those who are enraged with you! Fight those who are ready to combat with you! 0 people! ‘Ali does not consider anyone but himself worthy of being caliph. I swear to God that if he wins victory over you, he will destroy your religion and your world!”

‘Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr used many such futile and false words to incite the people and insistently went to such farfetched excesses.

al-Hasan ibn ‘Ali answers

The words of ‘Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr were heard by Imam ‘Ali, and he said to his son, Hassan: “My son! Rise and give an answer to ‘Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr.”

Imam al-Hasan stood up and after praising God, said to the people: “O people! You heard what ‘Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr said about my father. He has accused my father of ‘Uthman’s assassination and has uttered other futile and baseless words, too, whereas all of you know what slanders az-Zubayr, his father, had uttered about ‘Uthman and what obscene and biting words he had used about him, and what charges he levelled at him! You all remember that during ‘Uthman’s life and caliphate Talhah had become so insolent to him that he raised a banner above the treasury and actually declared his opposition to him. With such a record of misconduct to ‘Uthman, how can they attribute his assassination to my father and slander him? If I were to speak about those two men and their deeds, I could say much more and clarify greater facts. But concerning his claim that ‘Ali has usurped the position and governs the people without their satisfaction. I have a proper objection to offer about his father against his improper and false protest. I say that his father violated his pact with my father without any excuse whatsoever and to account for this unworthy act he says that he had sworn allegiance to my father without any willingness and desire of his own. Such a statement does not only fail to make his action permissible, but it also proves his guilt and sinfulness, since this statement is at

the same time a confession of his allegiance and an exposure of his wickedness in violating his pact, showing himself to be a perfidious man. But what ‘Abd Allah says in surprise about the domination of the Kufah forces over the army of Basra is comical and laughable., since there is no surprise in the domination of right over wrong and in vanquishing the latter. Naturally when right steps into the arena, wrong takes to flight and retreats.

Therefore what he has said about ‘Uthman’s followers is nothing really but false reasoning, since we have no dispute with the followers of ‘Uthman at all. Our only object is to fight that camel-riding woman and her friends who have in fact no connection with ‘Uthman and his friends.”(91)

‘Ali’s last speech

If were .to be killed a thousand times in battle, it is far sweeter than dying once in a soft bed.

Imam ‘Ali

In those three days Imam *‘Ali* used all his endeavour to establish peace and tranquility and employed all his power to attain this holy goal. But unfortunately he did not succeed in this purpose and his envoys to ‘A‘ishah’s army returned in disappointment and informed ‘Ali of Talhah and az-Zubayr’s final decision to fight.

Then ‘Ali rose to address his army and for the last time delivered the following oration, after praising God and greeting the Prophet he said:

“My friends! I gave three days’ respite to these people and warned them of perfidy, and proved their injustice and rebellion, hoping that they would abandon their ignorant decision, but they exhibited no shame and did not alter their decision. Now they have sent me a message to be ready to fight and to tolerate their swords and spears.

‘They declare that wrong desires have made ‘Ali proud and his carnal desires have misled him. Woe upon those who utter such words! May their mother mourn for them for proceeding on

the wrong path. As I have no fear of war, their threat of sword and spear produces no fear in me. Indeed he who has invited me towards swords and spears has not gone wrong in this, since I have been familiar with these weapons from the very beginning like the tribe of Banu Qarah.(92) Those who have witnessed my smashing assaults and combats and have felt the force of my blows, must prepare themselves for my sword. No. I have no need to be prepared, since lam the same son of Abu_Talib who has smashed the strong ranks of heathens, and scattered them. Today, too I attack them with the same valiant heart and strong arm, and I will smash their ranks.

O people! I have faith in my goal, and proceed only in the way of truth and justice. So I am certain that God will grant me victory and success.

O ‘people! You know that death is man’s last destiny, and overcomes everyone, and none can escape from its clutches. Even if one is not killed in war, he will die a natural death. So it is far better to die in the offer one’s blood for His satisfaction.

I swear to ‘Ali’s God that if I were to be killed a thousand times in the battlefield, it would be far more pleasant to me than to die in a soft bed.”

Then ‘Ali looked up at heaven and said: “O God! Talhah broke his pact with me and trampled upon it. He roused the people against ‘Uthman to kill him, and then accused me of his murder. O God! Give him no respite! O Merciful and Kind God! az-Zubayr severed his ties of kinship with me and violated his allegiance, and supported my enemies! O God! Protect me from their evil in any way that you know!”

When ‘Ali ended his oration, he descended from the pulpit and according to Ibn A’tham the two armies approached each other. ‘Ali reviewed his army, which was now twenty thousand strong, while Talhah’s forces were thirty thousand.(93)

‘Ali announces his military program

My friends! You should not begin the fight!
Imam ‘Ali

at-Tabari says the armies of ‘Ali and ‘A’ishah faced each other on Thursday, 15th of Jumada ath-Thani (Jumada II) in the year 36 of the Hijrah and arrayed themselves for battle.(94)

They spent three days in the state of preparedness, and no clash occurred between them during this time. In those three days ‘Ali’s whole efforts were directed towards securing peace, but he was unable to attain this goal and realized that a war is inevitable. Therefore he drew up a plan of action for his army and announced it to all his soldiers.

Historians give the full details of this plan. For example al-Hakim in al-Mustadrak and al-Muttaqj in Kanz al-’ummal quote the uncle of Yahya ibn Said as follows: On the day of the battle of al-Jamal, ‘Ali announced in a loud voice to his soldiers:

“0 people! Do not start shooting at the enemy or attacking them with your swords and spears and do not take the lead in fighting and bloodshed. Treat them kindly and speak with them gently. 0 people! If in this dangerous situation a person adopts the way of salvation, he will be happy and blessed on the day of resurrection.”

A narrator of this plan says: We were in the state of waiting until the noon of the same day, and abstained from action in accordance with ‘Ali’s order. But unlike us ‘A’ishah’s army made loud cries of “0 avengers of ‘Uthman! Rise up!”, and their cries echoed in that desert.

Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyah carried the banner in front of his father’s army and stood on a high spot watching the enemy’s army and hearing their cries. The Imam called him and asked him what they were saying and why their voices were so loud. Muhammad said: “They are shouting the slogan of “Avengers of ‘Uthman”, to incite the people to attack and fight.” ‘Ali raised his arms in prayer and said: “0 God! Today throw the assassins of ‘Uthman down on the dust of abjectness and vanquish them!”(95)

Some historians say that when the two armies came face to

face on that day ‘Ali addressing his followers said: “So long as the enemy has not started fighting, you must abstain from action and not take the lead. We praise God that we are in the right and our abstention from taking the lead in the combat is another evidence of our rightfulness.” Then be added: “When fighting begins, do not kill the wounded with spears, and after being victorious do not pursue those who flee. Do not strip the dead of their clothes and do not damage their bodies and limbs. When you reach the enemy’s houses, do not act immodestly and do not encroach upon their honour, nor pillage their wealth and property.”(96)

Here al-Mas’udi adds that ‘Ali said to his followers: “Do not seize as spoils of war their wealth and property except what you capture in the enemy’s military camp and battlefield. Do not molest their women even if they abuse you and insult your good and great men; for, they have a low intellect and their words are vain and worthless. The Prophet of God forbade us from hurting and molesting women even though they were heathens and infidels. Therefore the smallest injustice and molestation of women and even reproaching them is absolutely forbidden.”

‘Ali gives ultimatum through the Qur’an

My son had no fear of the in and invited them to the Qur’an.
A bereaved mother

When ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib was unsuccessful in his efforts to create peace and tranquility he decided to seek the aid of the Qur’an and give ultimatum to the enemy through it.

So he held up a Qur’an and said in a loud voice: “Who is willing to hold this Qur’an and invite the enemy to it, thus exposing himself to a sure death and martyrdom?”

At this moment a young man, who was dressed in a white and embroidered garment, stood up and said: “O ‘Ali! I heartily and lovingly welcome death in this cause!”

For the second time ‘Ali addressed the people and said: “Who

is prepared to stand along against that army and invite them to the Qur'an without fearing certain death in this cause?"

The young man said again: "O Commander of the faithful! May my life be offered to you! In this mission I have no fear of spear, sword or death."

Imam 'Ali handed him the Qur'an and dispatched him towards the enemy. He invited 'A'ishah's army to the Qur'an, but they rushed upon him and cut off his right arm and threw it down. That courageous youth picked up the Qur'an with his left hand and continued to invite them to the Qur'an. Again they rushed upon him and severed his left arm. He placed the Qur'an on his breast while blood was flowing down from his shoulders, and died.(97)

at-Tabari narrates this story as follows: 'Ali asked his followers: "Who can hold up this Qur'an face the enemy and invite them to obey its commands, and be so steadfast and self-sacrificing that if they cut off one of his hand, he would use his other hand and if they severed that hand too, he would hold it between his teeth and deliver the message of the Qur'an?" A very young man rose and said: "O 'Ali! I am ready! Let me carry out this mission." 'Ali repeated his proposal, but no one except that valiant youth volunteered to undertake that task, which meant certain death. 'Ali addressed that self-sacrificing youth and told him to hold up the Qur'an and walk to the enemy, telling them that the Qur'an would act as judge and arbitrator between the two sides, and its decrees would be binding upon them all, and thus bloodshed and fratricide would be avoided.

The young man carried out his mission thoroughly so that even after his hands were cut off, he held the Qur'an between his teeth and continued to deliver his message until he died.

It was after this incident that Imam 'Ali said: "I have given them every opportunity and now fighting is incumbent upon us."(98)

The bereaved mother of that youth, in mourning for her son composed an elegy the translation of which is as follows:

"O God! Be a witness that this youth invited their Muslims towards you and he recited the Qur'an to them without fearing their swords.

Their mother (A'ishah) was amongst them and saw their

wicked deeds and watched their oppression and tyranny.

This mother did not only not forbid them from following this path which was bound to end in misery and destruction.

But also incited and encouraged them towards injustice, and instead of using henna and indigo-leaves, she dyed their hair with blood."

Abu Mikhnaf says this poem was composed by Umm Dhurayh in mourning for her young son. Ibn A'tham, too, says that this young man was from Kufah and of the house of Majashi'. His hands were cut off by a servant of 'A'ishah and killed by him.

'Ammar speaks with 'A'ishah and her army commanders

'A'ishah! It was you who gave the orders for 'Uthman's death.
'Ammar

One day the Prophet turned to 'Ammar and said: "'Ammar! You will be killed by a tyrannical people and an unruly army." (99)

Since the day the above historical phrase was uttered by the Prophet about 'Ammar he was regarded by the Muslims as a model of right and justice, and whenever he was present in an army, he was considered as a living example of truth and rightfulness, while the opposing army's wrongness became evident.

For this reason Imam 'Ali sent 'Ammar to 'A'ishah and her military commanders to speak with and advise them, hoping that they would be influenced by his counsel or at least they would consider it as an additional ultimatum.

al-Mas'udi narrates this topic as follows:

In the battle of al-Jamal, a litter of strong, hard wood was made for 'A'ishah covered with felt and cowhide and surrounded by chain-mail as protection from all dangers and an iron curtain around it, making the litter look like a strong and invincible fort. They placed it on a well-known camel of Ya'la ibn Umayyah, named 'Askar. She sat in the middle of the litter and

the camel moved in front of the military column.

When ‘Ammar saw this scene, he halted between the two armies and addressing ‘ ishah’s army said: “O people! You have not treated your prophet fairly to leave your women behind the curtains and drag his consort to the battlefield facing swords.” Then approaching ‘A’ishah’s litter, hesaid to her: “ ‘A’ishah! What do you want of us?” ‘A’ishah answered: “‘Uthman’s blood!”

‘Ammar said: “May God kill unruly and unjust people who claim blood without having the slightest right.”

Then ‘Ammar addressed the people and said: “You are better acquainted with those who had a part in ‘Uthman’s murder, and you know well in which army his assassins are present. Indeed you know perfectly well that ‘Uthman’s murderers are the same people who have started this dispersion and war under the pretext of avenging his blood.”

At this moment showers of arrows were sent by the enemy towards ‘Ammar, and he sang the following poem:

“‘A’ishah! You started the war and bloodshed,
All these stormy waves of events are caused by you.
It was you who issued the order for ‘Uthman’s death,
It was you who gave a verdict for his infidelity.”

Arrows continued to pour down on ‘Ammar. He whipped his horse and galloped away from the hostile army and returning to ‘Ali he said: “O Commander of the faithful, how long are we to wait? As I can see, these people have prepared nothing for you but war.”

‘Ali gives his last ultimatum

God! Be a witness! 0 friends of mine, offer all arguments to them.
Imam ‘Ali

‘Ali employed all the possible means to establish peace and used various ways to bring reason to the enemy and left no avenue unexplored.

1-He wrote letters to their commanders, warning them of

perfidy, war and bloodshed.

2-He sent messages to 'A'ishah and her army commanders, inviting them to peace and tranquility.

3-He made a direct contact with the enemy commanders, giving them counsel and advice.

4-He sent the Qur'an to the enemy, inviting them to act upon its verdict as a way of solving differences.

5-He prepared a military plan for his followers, recommending such a kind and pacific behaviour and treatment towards the enemy that would have softened the most stubborn of them towards peace and order.

6-Lastly he dispatched 'Ammar who was in the words of the Prophet a criterion of right and justice to reason with 'A'ishah and her army and invite them to peace.

These were the points, which were discussed, in previous chapters on the basis of reliable historical evidence. The last opportunity which 'Ali gave the enemy for peace was that in retaliation for their attacks upon his envoys, he advised his own army to show patience, and fortitude and warned them not to start the fight and said: "O Just God! Be a witness, and O friends, be patient and let the enemy be given every chance, leaving them no room for pretext."

But despite all his efforts for peace the enemy showed a greater insistence upon war. Historians describing this final ultimatum of 'Ali and the obstinacy of 'A'ishah's army, write as follows: al-Hakim says in al-Mustadrak: "az-Zubayr, commander of 'A'ishah's army ordered his archers to shoot arrows collectively at them. al-Hakim adds that this order was a declaration of war and an order for attack issued by az-Zubayr.

Ibn A'tham and many other historians write: In the battle of Hunayn the Prophet picked up a handful of earth and threw it at the enemy, saying may they be disgraced! 'A'ishah, too, imitated this gesture of the Prophet and used it against the Muslims in the battle of al-Jamal, and in throwing a handful of pebbles at Ali's army, she said: "May they be disgraced!"

At this moment a man of 'Ali's army reproached 'A'ishah and said: "'A'ishah! It was not you who threw earth at 'Ali's army; it was the hand of Satan that made you commit such an ugly act."[100]

After this actual declaration of war ‘A’ishah’s army formally began their assaults.

Abu Mikhnaf and other historians write: Shooting at ‘Ali’s forces was begun by ‘A’ishah’s army. His forces cried out: “O Commander of the faithful! Our patience is at an end. They are exhausting and extirpating us! Issue the order for defense!”

At this time they brought to ‘Ali’s tent the body of a man who was covered with the arrows of the enemy and said: “O Amir al-Mu’minin! This is the corpse of one of your devoted friends destroyed by the enemy.”

The Imam looked up at heaven and said: “O God! Be a witness!” Then he turned to them and said: “Be patient! Let the enemy be given every opportunity for peace!”

Again they carried in another corpse and said: “O Emir! This is so and so who was killed by the enemy’s arrows!”

Once more ‘Ali looked up at heaven and said: “O God Almighty!” You are a true Witness’ and again this time ‘Ali did not issue the command to begin the fighting, and said to his followers: “You must show a greater fortitude against the enemy’s injustice and aggression, and give more proof of your rightfulness by giving them every opportunity to turn to peace.

At that moment ‘Abd Allah ibn Badil al-Khuza’i who was a companion and friend of the Prophet, brought the bloody corpse of his brother ‘Abd ar-Rahman and placing it down in front of ‘Ali said: “O ‘Ali! This is my brother who has been killed unchivalrously by the enemy!”

‘Ali who had given the enemy every opportunity to make peace, saw himself faced with an accomplished wrong action and was left with no alternative but war. So he uttered the holy phrase “We are from God and return to Him,” and put on the Prophet’s chain mail named “Dhat al-Fudul” and wore his turban and mounted the Prophet’s mule named “Duldul.”(101) Then he tied his famous sword, named “Dhu al-Faqar” to his belt. He gave the Prophet’s black banner, named “Uqab” to his son Muhammad ibn al-Hanafjyah, and said to his dear sons al-Hasan and al-Husayn: “My sons! As you were deeply loved by the Prophet of God and are related to him, I have exempted you from the task of bearing the banner (102) and have entrusted it to your brother Muhammad.”

Thus the Imam prepared himself for the combat and addressing the army, recited the following verse of the Qur'an:

"Do you think that you would enter the garden while yet the state of those who have passed away before you has not come upon you; distress and affliction befell them and they were shaken violently so that the Apostle and those who believed with him said: When will the help of Allah come! Now surely the help of Allah is nigh. '[103]

And then 'Ali, leaving for the battle, uttered this prayer:

"May God give us all fortitude and perseverance and bring us victory, and support us in critical moments and perilous events."

'Ali's meeting with az-Zubayr

az-Zubayr! You will unjustly fight 'Ali!
The Prophet

The two armies arrayed themselves, facing each other ready for combat. At this time 'Ali proceeded towards 'A'ishah's army and called az-Zubayr to come forward and said: "az-Zubayr! What is your reason in bringing forth such a huge army to this land?"

az-Zubayr said: "As I do not consider you worthy of the position of caliph, I have come here to depose you.

'Ali said: "az-Zubayr! What you say is nothing but a pretext; for I am not inferior to 'Uthman as a caliph. You used to be a good man of the house of 'Abd al-Muttalib and were related to our house. But on the day your son 'Abd Allah assumed position, he caused division and dispersion between us. Az-Zubayr! I am surprised that you claim 'Uthman's blood from me whereas you yourself are his assassin. May God bring down the most painful suffering and the worst calamity upon the one who has shown the most hostility and rancor to 'Uthman. az-Zubayr! Do you remember the day when you and I were together and the Prophet passed by, he turned to me saying: A day will come, 'Ali, when this cousin of yours will fight you unjustly!"

az-Zubayr now remembered the words of the Prophet and

said: "0 'Ali! I swear to God that henceforth I will not fight you." Saying this, he turned to his son 'Abd Allah and said to him:

'Abd Allah! I am very apprehensive of the course we have adopted and I fear its consequences. Let me say explicitly that I do not feel inclined to fight 'Ali."

'Abd Allah said: "Father! On the first day you took a steadfast step in this course and there was no sign of hesitation and anxiety in your visage. But today you seem to have changed your mind and have allowed anxiety to penetrate your heart. Maybe it is the hoisted banners and drawn swords of 'Ali's army that have frightened you to yield to doubt and anxiety. Yes, father the truth is that on seeing yourself face to face with death, you prefer flight and withdrawal to fighting, otherwise there is no doubt about the sanctity of the objective."

'Abd Allah resorted to many such futile arguments with his father to the extent that the latter shouted angrily: Woe upon such a son as you who insists upon his father's misery and destruction! Son! Do you compel me to fight 'Ali while I have sworn never again to fight him? What can I do with this oath?

'Abd Allah said: "It is easy, father! Break your oath, and as an expiation set free Sirjis, your slave to satisfy God!"

az-Zubayr followed his son's suggestion and as atonement for violating his oath to 'All, he freed his slave and returned to his army and prepared himself for combat.

Ibn A'tham al-Kufi, too narrates the meeting of 'Ali with az-Zubayr as follows: On meeting him 'Ali said: "az-Zubayr! For what reason have you raised the banner of opposition to me?" az-Zubayr answered: "To avenge 'Uthman's blood." 'Ali said: "It was you and your friend Talhah who killed 'Uthman and his blood is on your hands. If you are really truthful, place yourselves in the hands of 'Uthman's sons and heirs to kill you in retaliation for their father's murder, or receive ransom for it."

The Details of the Event

at-Tabari narrates this story elsewhere with greater details and adds that 'Ali met Talhah and az-Zubayr at a spot between the two armies their horses' necks were side by side, and 'All said to them:

"O Talhah! O az-Zubayr! You have gathered together a huge

army and have armed and equipped it fully, while you do not have any excuse or reason to offer at the threshold of our Just God and are surely to be condemned there. Fear God and His wrath! You have rendered considerable services and have engaged in holy wars for the sake of God and for the elevation of monotheism, Islam and Muslims. Do not waste all those fine services and hard labors by the creation of mischief, internal disunion and the carnage of Muslims and do not turn all that reward into guilt and sin, resulting in fire and punishment. Do not act like that old woman that tightly wounded several threads together with much labor, and then unwounded them with even a greater labor. Talhah! az-Zubayr! Were we not like brothers who allowed no injustice and transgression to each other? What has happened now to make you rebel against me and declare that shedding my blood is legitimate?"

In answer to all this counsel of 'Ali, Talhah said: "'Ali! Your guilt is that you roused the people against 'Uthman and unjustly shed his blood!"

'Ali, in answer, recited this verse: *"God will reward each person according to his deeds.* "What he meant by this verse was that punishment will be dealt to the person who has killed 'Uthman, not to someone else who is unjustly accused. Then 'Ali added: "Talhah! When I had no part in killing 'Uthman, how can you claim his blood from me? May God damn those who are guilty of shedding 'Uthman's blood."

Then he turned to az-Zubayr and said: "O az-Zubayr! Do you remember the day when the Prophet of God passed by me, looked at me, smiled kindly and I returned his smile? You said:

O Prophet of God, Abu Talib's son does not abstain from ostentation! The Prophet was angry at your words and told you in reprimand: Be silent, az-Zubayr! 'Ali is far removed from ostentation. Then he added: az-Zubayr! As you are caviling at 'Ali today, I swear to God that a day will come when you will fight him unjustly."

Here az-Zubayr remembered the Prophet's words and feeling penitent, he said: "If I had remembered these words, I would not have risen against you. Now even though I have left home with the purpose of fighting you here, I will abandon this intention. I swear to God that I will no longer fight you."

at-Tabari says: After this conversation 'Ali returned to his army and said to them: "az-Zubayr has decided not to fight us." az-Zubayr, too, went to 'A'ishah and said: " 'A'ishah! Since the day I have known myself, I have taken no step without considering its consequence, except in this war the result of which is unknown to me and of the consequence of which lam worried."

'A'ishah said: "az-Zubayr! Say your last word and explicitly declare your decision."

az-Zubayr said: "I intend to leave this army to itself and go my own way.

az-Zubayr's son who was present, began to reproach his father severely and said: "Father! Now that you have made the two armies face each other and when the combat may begin any moment, you are going to leave them at this critical and dangerous moment and withdraw yourself? The sight of 'Ali's sword and the enemy's banners carried by valiant youths must have produced such a fear and anxiety in your heart as to make you retire from the army."

az-Zubayr answered: " 'Abd Allah! I swear to God that it is not a question of fear and anxiety. But I have taken an oath not to fight 'Ali."

'Abd Allah said: "Father, there is an easy solution. Break your promise and make atonement for it, and then begin the combat."

az-Zubayr accepted his son's proposal broke his promises to 'Ali and in expiation for it freed his slave Makhul, and joined the army once again. 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Sulayman at-Tamimi has composed a poem about this story as follows:

"I have never seen a day like this,
For; that man greatly astonished me;
A man who broke his promise,
And freed his slave in expiation of it,
So as to remove from him the sin of perfidy,
But he committed a greater sin with this act.

Another poet, too, of az-Zubayr's army composed the following:

"az-Zubayr freed his slave makhul in expiation for his oath so *as not to be perfidious in his faith,*

But in vain, since with that expiation the signs of perfidy became more visible on his forehead."

The fate of az-Zubayr

I prefer disgrace to the fire of hell.
az-Zubayr

al-Mas'udi writes as follows:

When the two armies faced each other 'Ali put down his weapon mounted the Prophet's personal mule, and proceeded towards 'A'ishah's army and called forth az-Zubayr. az-Zubayr put on his battle dress and went towards 'Ali. When 'A'ishah heard of this matter she felt greatly worried about az-Zubayr, her sister's husband and commander of her army, and involuntarily cried out: "Woe for the misfortune of my sister, Asma' who will become a widow!"

They told her not to be uneasy since 'Ali was not armed and had not come forward to fight. 'A'ishah was relieved to hear this. When az-Zubayr reached 'Ali they embraced and kissed one another. 'Ali then said: "az-Zubayr! Woe upon you! For what purpose have you come to this land with this dangerous army? What has made you raise the banner of opposition to me?"

az-Zubayr answered: "It is to avenge 'Uthman's blood that has made me resort to this campaign and war.

'Ali said: "May God destroy him who has had a greater share in 'Uthman's murder. az-Zubayr! Do you remember the day when the Prophet said to you:

az-Zubayr! a day will come when you will fight 'Ali."

az-Zubayr said: "God forgive me! I am penitent of my deed and repent to you. 0 God! Pardon my sin! Then he turned to 'Ali and said: God knows the secret of my heart and is a witness of the truth of my words, that if I had remembered the Prophet's remark, I would never have resorted to this uprising, and would not have left my house for war."

'Ali said: "It is not too late yet. You can now withdraw from combat and return home from here."

az-Zubayr said: "How can I do so and submit to this great

disgrace while the two armies are facing each other, ready for combat. It is too late, the way is blocked for me to withdraw."

'Ali said: "If you accept this disgrace today, it is far better than to be involved tomorrow with both disgrace and the burning fire of abominable hell."

Here. az-Zubayr was impressed by 'Ali's words and became penitent of his opposition to 'Ali and decided to retire from combat, meanwhile murmuring a poem having the following meaning:

"I tolerate disgrace so as to be saved from the abject fire of hell,
How can my weak body resist against burning fires?
'Ali reminded me of a story that I knew but had forgotten
Indeed a war with 'Ali is condemned by both the religion and the world,
And they consider it a great disgrace.
So I said to 'Ali: 0 Abu al-Hasan! Reproach me no more, for some of your words
Were enough to warn and admonish me."

Al-Mas'udi continues his narration and says: When 'Abd Allah, son of az-Zubayr, learnt of his father's decision he said to him: "Father! How can you leave us at such a critical moment, and take to flight?"

az-Zubayr said: "My son! 'Ali reminded of a story, which I had forgotten and that story has dissuaded me from combat."

'Abd Allah said: "No father, what you said is only an excuse. You are really frightened by the sharp swords and long spears in the hands of valiant young warriors of the enemy, making you withdraw from the combat!"

az-Zubayr said: "May God make such a son as you abject for bringing misery and destruction upon his father and trying to disgrace him."(104)

The above answer is quoted by Ibn A'tham, but according to al-Mas'udi az-Zubayr answered 'Abd Allah as follows: "'Abd Allah! You are wrong in your supposition. Fear can never prevent me from fighting. But today I was reminded of a story, which I had forgotten with the passage of time. That story admonished and checked me from fighting *'Ali.* Thus I preferred the disgrace of withdrawal from war to the fire of hell, and so I

retired from combat. But my son! Now that you consider me a coward, I will remove this stain on my character with a sword and spear. Saying this, he took his spear and rushed swiftly upon the right wing of 'Ali's army. When 'Ali noticed this angry assault of az-Zubayr, he ordered his soldier to give him respite and abstain from injuring him since he was so roused to anger that he did not behave normally. az-Zubayr again rushed upon the left win of 'Ali's army, and then made a violent attack upon the center." Then he cried out: "How can a person who shows such courage in daringly approaching the enemy's army be afraid?"

az-Zubayr then retired and proceeded towards a desert, which was called Wadi as-Saba'. A man said to al-Ahnaf ibn Qays at-Tamimi who had left Basra to be neutral and had stayed in that desert: "Look! That is az-Zubayr!" al-Ahnaf said:

"I have nothing to do with az-Zubayr He has created a dispute between two groups of Muslims and produced war and bloodshed, and now he is safely passing through the desert and returning to his home and life. Let him go!"

At that spot az-Zubayr dismounted form his horse to perform prayer. At this time a man named 'Amr ibn Jarmuz(105) rushed upon him from behind and killed him. Thus the life of the first commander of 'A'ishah's army was brought to an end, and from that moment onwards Talhah acted as commander of that army.(106)

The fate of Talhah

Truly 'Uthman's blood is on Talhah's hands.
Marwan

Ibn 'Asakir says: Before the commencement of the battle 'Ali called forth Talhah and said: "0 Talhah I ask you in the name of God, have you not heard the Prophet say: Whoever considers me as his lord should regard 'Ali as his lord, too? 0 God! Regard 'Ali's friends as your friends and his enemies as your enemies."

Talhah said: "Yes I have heard it and remember it clearly."

'Ali said: "And yet strangely enough you fight me?"

at-Tabari writes about this matter: Before beginning the battle ‘Ali met Talhah and said to him: “O Talhah you are a man who has left his wife at home and brought out the Prophet’s consort to the battlefield and have violated your pact with me.”

Against these protests Talhah only said: “I did not willingly swear allegiance to you. It was force and the sword that compelled me to do so.”

Ibn ‘Asakir and adh-Dhahabi write: Abu Raja’ says: “I saw Talhah riding a horse amidst his soldiers and shouting 0 people be silent and listen to me. But despite his shouts the noise of the crowd did not die down. Talhah was vexed at the people’s indifference and said: Fie to these wolfish people who are the flies of hell-fire.”

It is stated in the history of Ibn A’tham that Talhah addressed his army and exclaimed loudly: “O servants of God! Be patient and show perseverance, since patience and victory are two old friends. Victory is won by those who show fortitude and steadfastness and they receive the reward of tolerating hardships.”

Abu Mikhnaf writes Jundab ibn ‘Abd Allah as saying: “In the battle of al-Jamal, I saw Talhah and his followers fighting *‘Ali,* but they were badly wounded and retreated. His soldiers scattered and fled. He was more wounded than others, and lifting his sword, he shouted: O servants of God! Be steadfast and patient. Victory depends on it, and you will receive its reward.”

How Talhah was killed

al-Ya’qubi, Ibn ‘Asakir, Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr in alIsti’ab Ibn al-Athir in al-Kamil and Ibn fiajar ‘Asqalani narrate: When the two armies of ‘Ali and Talhah were engaged in fighting, Marwan who was a commander in Talhah’s army said: “If I do not use this opportunity today to avenge ‘Uthman’s blood; when can I get another chance for it?” Saying this, he shot an arrow, which hit Talhah’s knee and cut a vein and he bled so profusely that he collapsed and died, thus putting an end to his adventurous life. Ibn Sa’d says in Tabaqat Talhah himself realized that the mortal wound had been inflicted on

him by one of his own supporters, and in his dying moments he said: "I swear to God that the arrow, which vanquished me was not sent by 'Ali's army."

Concerning Talhah's death al-Mas'udi writes: During the combat at a moment when Marwan found Talhah careless of himself, he thought of avenging 'Uthman. So he exclaimed: "By God it makes no difference whether I shoot at 'Ali's or Talhah's army." Then he shot at his friend, Talhah, cutting the vein of his arm and he died as a result of profuse bleeding.

Ibn Sa'd describes the incident as follows: Marwan noticed a chink in Talhah's mail as he was among his horsemen, and with a sure aim he shot an arrow at that target and thus he killed Talhah.

Some historians say: Marwan observed Talhah amidst the army in a critical position and said: "By God this man was the most obstinate enemy of 'Uthman, and as I have come to avenge 'Uthman's blood, what would be better then killing his assassin, and leaving alone all those who are unjustly accused of his murder. He then shot an arrow at Talhah and killed him."

al-Mustadrak of al-Hakim History of Ibn 'Asakir and Usd alghabah write: After killing Talhah, Marwan turned to Aban, son of 'Uthman and said: "Aban, I have punished one of your father's assassins for his deed and have cooled your burning heart."

Ibn A'tham gives more details about Talhah's death and says: During the combat Marwan said to his slave: "I am surprised that this Talhah was one day the staunchest enemy of 'Uthman and incited the people to kill him and spared no effort in this way until he shed his blood. But today he has risen to avenge his blood and has joined the rank of 'Uthman's friends and sons! I intend to kill this capricious and hypocritical man and deliver the Muslims from his wickedness and remove his ill-omened shadow from over these unfortunate people. You boy, must stand before me so that I can watch him from behind. If you play your part well, I shall be pleased and will set you free as a reward for this service."

The slave, who longed to be freed, did as he was told acting like a shield for Marwan's ambush, and at a suitable moment Marwan shot a poisoned arrow at Talhah and split his thigh.

Historians say: When Talhah found himself unable to do anything for his mortal wound, he said to his slave: “You can at least carry me to the shelter of a tree to relieve me from this intense heat of the sun.” The slave said: “O master! There is no tree in this desert nor a shelter where can I carry you to? Now Talhah. said sadly: No one in the Quraysh tribe has been as unfortunate as me. Alas! My blood is wasted, and my killer is unknown! O God! Where did this burning arrow come from? Who brought down this misery and death upon me? This arrow was not sent by the enemy. What can I do? This was my destiny!”

al-Mada’ini says: After Marwan’s arrow hit the target and knocked Talhah down, Talhah withdrew from the battlefield and found a quiet and safe place to rest, whenever the soldiers of ‘Ali’s army approached, he asked for mercy and imploringly said: “I am Talhah and am under your asylum. Is there not a chivalrous man amongst you to show me clemency and save me from death?”

al-Hasan al-Basri, referring to Talhah’s request for mercy, says that he had no need for it, since he was included in a general amnesty and before the commencement of the battle ‘Ali had ordered his soldiers not to kill the wounded.

Historians say that after Talhah was killed by his friend Marwan his body was buried in Sabkhah, one of the squares of Basra.

Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr and adh-Dhahabi say:

Talhah was the first man of ‘A’ishah’s army to be killed who had acted as commander of that army after az-Zubayr’s retirement. Thus the second commander met his death, but his death produced no fear in the warriors of ‘A’ishah, since the banner of this army was in fact the camel, which carried ‘A’ishah’s litter and went ahead of the army. Thus with Talhah’s death the attention was drawn to the camel, and the warriors surrounded it and fought as violently as before.(107)

The final battle begins

'A'ishah Disgrace is better for you than fighting the Muslims and your sons.
Imam 'Ali

The battle al-Jamal consists of several small and big clashes:

1-When 'A'ishah's army entered Basra, a conflict occurred between that army and the forces of the governor of Basra, ending with the victory of the latter and a peace agreement.

2-'A'ishah's army violated the terms of the peace treaty, and during a very dark night they raided the mosque, the treasury and governor's palace, resulting in a clash in which 'A'ishah's forces were victorious, ending with the capture of Basra by them aid the expulsion of its governor.

3-Hakim ibn Jabalah a dignitary of Basra, hearing of the aggression of 'A'ishah's army and their violation of the peace treaty, rose with the members of his tribe to oppose them, resulting in a third clash between the two forces, ending with the apparent victory of 'A'ishah, and death of Hakim and his followers.

4-The fourth and last clash which was the biggest encounter of the battle of al-Jamal took place with the entry of 'Ali to Basra, ending with a severe defeat of 'A'ishah's army. In this battle 'A'ishah's army, unlike the former clashes, had no banner, her camel serving in the place of a banner, proceeding at the head of the army(108) and with its movement raising the morale of the warriors, and so long as the camel was on its feet the soldiers showed no weakness, and valiantly fought 'Ali's army. 'A'ishah was mounted on it and acted as commander and issued the order for assault.

When 'Ali observed this, he put on his black turban, armed himself, had his forces readied for combat (109) and then handed the banner to his son Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyah.

Muhammad bin al-Hanafjyah says: "My father 'Ali entrusted the banner with me and issued the order for attack. I stepped forward and met with a strong barrier of the enemy's swords and spears checking my advance." 'Ali cried to me again:
"Go ahead, you tardy one!" I looked back and said: "Father! How

can I go ahead when I am checked by a barrier of swords and spears?"

He says: At this moment someone seized the banner so quickly from me that I could not discover who he was. I looked around in astonishment and noticed that my father was carrying the banner in front of the army and attacking the enemy's ranks, and loudly reciting the following lines:

"'A'ishah! It was my goodness and indulgence that made you so haughty as to rebel against me!

'A'ishah! Be not haughty, for, these people who surround you are only enemies in the garment of friends.

'A'ishah! Death and disgrace is better for you than to cause war and bloodshed among the Muslims and your sons."

An account of Ka'b ibn Suwar
the first position of 'A'ishah

Ka'b! Am mat like a mat her to you?
'A'ishah

The camel's halter held by Ka'b [110]

As we said: 'A'ishah's camel served as the banner of her army, and anyone who held its halter was regarded as the banner-bearer, and he prided himself for that task thinking to it a great honour. This post was at first given to Ka'b ibn Suwar, a well-known judge of Basra. When the battle began and the clash gradually reacted its height, Ka'b hung a Qur'an around his neck, and held a stick in one hand and the camel's halter in the other, and began to walk ahead of the army with strange and self-satisfied gestures. As it happened an arrow from an unknown quarter struck him, knocking him down and thus the first position or rather the first banner-bearer of 'A'ishah departed this life.

Who is Ka'b ibn Suwar?

Ka'b had been a judge of Basra since the time of 'Umar, the second caliph, a position which he held until the battle of al-Jamal. He had no belief or interest in that combat and did not

think it right. As at-Tabari states, Ka'b himself used to say: "I swear to God that my view about this battle is like the view of an old women who advised her son as follows: My boy! Neither stand aloof from the people, nor take part in their disputes or fights."

Ibn Sa'd, too, says: When Talhah az-Zubayr and 'A'ishah entered Basra, Ka'b ibn Suwar locked himself in the house in order to stay away from riot and war, and even ordered his meats delivered through a hole of his room. In this way he severed his contact and communication with all people until 'A'ishah was informed that Ka'b enjoyed popularity and a special social position and if she could win him over to participate in the war, she could greatly benefit from the aid of the al-Azd tribe which were several thousands in number. To gain his favour and agreement 'A'ishah visited his house to talk with him, but Ka'b did not give her a favorable answer. 'A'ishah showed much insistence and saId: "O Ka'b! Am I not like a mother to you, and do I not have such a right towards you? She harped so much on such points that Ka'b eventually yielded and agreed to her proposals."

Ibn Sa'd has not divulged the name of the person who persuaded 'A'ishah to meet Ka'b. But ash-Shaykh al-Mufid, the great Shi'ah scholar, attributes this suggestion to Talhah and az-Zubayr. He says: Among the tribes which at first swore no allegiance to Talhah and az-Zubayr was the al-Azd tribe, since Ka'b who was the judge of Basra, and chief of the Yemen people and head of the al-Azd tribe had abstained from swearing allegiance to Talhah and az-Zubayr, and so the members of the al-Azd tribe refused to swear allegiance. Talhah and az-Zubayr sent someone to Ka'b asking for his assistance, but Ka'b refused their request and said: "What I can do today is to show impartiality to both sides, and as I take no step in your favour, I will do nothing against you."

Talhah and az-Zubayr did not approve of Ka'b's response and said to each other that they should not be context with Ka'b's neutrality, but they must secure his collaboration in order to make use of his power. For, if he isolated himself, his tribe would to abstain from aiding them.

Therefore Talhah and az-Zubayr went to Ka'b's house and

asked to meet him. Ka'b refused their request. So they went back to 'A'ishah and discussed with her the serious consequence of Ka'b's neutrality and requested her to visit Ka'b and obtain his agreement.

At first 'A'ishah refused to visit Ka'b, but sent someone else to Ka'b, inviting him to a meeting with her. However Ka'b refused her invitation to the meeting. When Talhah and az-Zubayr saw this, they persuaded 'A'ishah to go to Ka'b's house herself and said to her: "If Ka'b refused to collaborate with us, we will be deprived of the aid of his tribe which is the largest tribe of Basra. Therefore, no alternative remains for you but to mount your mule and go to his house, he will not refuse your proposal in view of the respect due to your position."

They insisted so much on their proposal that she finally agreed, and mounted her mule and as she was surrounded by a number of the people of Basra, she went to Ka'b's house, and after much discussion and persuasion she won his agreement. Thus Ka'b was dragged out of the corner of his house to the battlefield, she had persuaded this neutral and retiring men not only to join her army but also to act as its banner-bearer.

al-Mubarrad says in his al-Kamil: On the day of the battle of al-Jamal, Ka'b hung a Qur'an around his neck and joined 'A'ishah's army with four brothers of his, all of them fought courageously until they were killed. Their mother came to their funeral and composed an elegy mourning them as follows:

"O eyes of mine!
Shed tears many tears!
For them, for those youths who were the best Arabs.
The youths for whom there was no difference
Which of the two Quraysh Einirs would be victor;
Whether 'All would win Und be context,
Or Talhah and his supporters!" (111)

By this slogan, the mother of youths wanted to inculcate that Ka'b and his brothers were sincerely impartial but it was 'A'ishah's persistence and hard stand that dragged them to the battlefield and bought them death.

The camel's bridle
in the Quraysh hand

I am 'Attab's son *and my sword is Walul.*
The second position of 'A'ishah

After Ka'b bin Suwar, the first position of 'A'ishah, had been killed, the Quraysh took precedence in holding the bridle of 'A'ishah's camel, acting as her position. One of the Quraysh was 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn 'Attab(112) grandson of Abu Jahl who took the bridle and moved on fighting ahead of the army and at the same time sang a war song the meaning of which is as follows:

"I am Attab's son and my sword is called "Walul". Getting killed for the sake of this camel, Is a source of pride and a sign of honour."

Thus with such boastful songs and slogans 'Abd ar-Rahman encouraged and roused the soldiers to combat and self-sacrifice and he himself engaged in fighting. The moment came when 'Ali's warriors attacked him and after severing his arm killed him.

After him seventy others of the Quraysh in turn took the bridle, each one lost his life in this task, for, anyone who dared to act as postillion was either killed or his arm was cut off.(113)

The camel's bridle
in the hands of Banu Najiyah

I see in your visage the manly features of the Quraysh.
Aishah

After the Quraysh the members of the Banu Najiyah house took the lead in holding the camel's bridle. It was 'A'ishah's custom when someone took the bridle, to ask him who he was and from what tribe. When the Banu Najiyah's turn came, she was told that they were of the Banu Najiyah house. So, in order to encourage them, she said: "You must show fortitude and

perseverance, for, I see in the visage of your house the features of the valiant men of the Quraysh."

She made this remark on that occasion because there was a difference of opinion about the connection of the Banu Najiyah to the Quraysh, and some linealogists did not consider them related to the Quraysh.(114)

On the other hand it was considered a great tribal disgrace by the Banu Najiyah not to be related to the Quraysh since such alienation endangered their social prestige. That is why 'A'ishah took the opportunity at this critical moment to encourage them by attributing their lineage to the Quraysh, so that they may exhibit a greater devotion and self-sacrifice. Thus all the members of this house volunteered to hold the camel's bridle and they all lost their lives in this way.(115)

The camel's bridle in the hand of the Dabbah tribe

O people! 'A'ishah is your mother; and to aid her is your religious duty, and abandoning her is a sin.

'Amr ibn Yathribi

After the death of Ka'b and others of the Quraysh tribe and the Banu Najiyah house, it was the turn of the Dabbah house to act as positions, and the first of this house to hold the bridle was 'Amr ibn Yathribi. But at once he entrusted this task to his son, and he himself made a violent assault upon 'Ali's forces, killing two men and returning to his place. When for the second time he intended to attack 'Ali's army, he addressed the men of the al-Azd tribe in order to encourage them to valiant fighting and said:

"As I have driven 'Ali's army into a corner and killed some of them, they are bound to kill me in their turn. So I entrust 'A'ishah with you. O you men of the al-Azd tribe! You are valiant warriors, and 'A'ishah is your dear mother. Help and support her, and defend her sanctity with your life. For, to help and protect her is the religious duty of every one of you, and

weakness and negligence in it means disobedience to and violation of a mother's right, and is thus a sin.

After this oration 'Amr ibn Yathribi once more attacked 'Ali's army and fought on until he was killed.(116) at-Tabari says: On the day of al-Jamal 'Amr ibn Yathribi encouraged the members of his tribe Banu_Dabbah to fight, and one after another they held the camel's bridle, sang war songs and continued to fight. In this way forty of them were killed, and they showed such a devotion and self-sacrifice that 'A'ishah later on spoke of their loyalty and perseverance, and she said: "So long as the voice of the Banu Dabbah was heard, my camel did not lose its equilibrium."(1 17)

Again at-Tabari says: In the battle of al-Jamal the men of the Dabbah and al-Azd tribes held the bridle of 'A'ishah's camel and defended it The men of the al-Azd tribe gathered the dung of 'A'ishah's camel, split it and smelt it, exclaiming:

"How lovely! The dung of the camel of our mother 'A'ishah smells of musk! Oh, what a life-giving perfume!"(118)

The camel's bridle
in the hand of the al-Azd tribe

O 'A'ishah! 0 the best of mothers!
An al-Azdi man

The men of the Dabbah house who took the bridle, were killed one after another. Then the men of the al-Azd tribe came forward to take the bridle. 'A'ishah said: "Yes, the al-Azdis are free men who show fortitude in hardships." She added that so long as the Banu_Dabbah were alive she felt that her army was victorious, but after their death she had no hope of victory.

With this remark 'A'ishah so roused the al-Azd tribe that they fought with all their heart and soul. Of this tribe the first man to take the bridle of her camel was 'Amr ibn al-Ashraf al-Azdi, who fought so valiantly that he killed with one stroke of the sword anyone who approached him. He recited exciting war songs to encourage the other man of his tribe and said:

"O mother! O the best of all mothers!

Do you not see what devotion valiant men show in your presence,
And what great men buy swords and spears
With their life in respect for you?"

As Ibn al-Ashraf al-Azdi was reciting and fighting, his cousin al-Harith ibn Zuhrah al-Azdi rushed from 'Ali's army upon him, and these two dealt so many strokes of the sword to each other that both of them fell down and raised much dust with their feet until both of them died, and thus 'Amr ibn al-Ashraf, the brave position of 'A'ishah and thirteen others of his house died one after another.[119]

A strange story

He tore away my ear.

Hero of the story

al-Mada'ini a well-known historian, writes:

The narrator says: I saw a man in Basra who had no ear. I asked him the reason for this loss. He said: In the battle of al-Jamal after the combat ended I was looking around among the deads, when I saw a man who seemed to have still some life in him. He moved his head about and recited a poem the meaning of which is as follows:

"Our mothet her 'A'ishah dragged us to our death and annihilation,
And yet we did not turn away from her command,
And we were not sated with fighting and self-sacrifice in her presence,
Until we were satiated with our death.
We of the Dabbah house fought in such a way in her presence,
That she and her followers had no need of aid from others.
Woe upon us to submit to the Taym tribe
Who were nothing but a handful of slave-boys and slave-girls."

He was dying and yet he recited that poem. In surprise I said: "Man! This is no time for recitation. You should utter the words "There is no God but Allah" and the words testifying the

uniqueness of God and the Prophethood of His Apostle." He answered: "O son of a decayed women! What are you saying? Do you expect me to declare my helplessness and miserable condition at the moment of death?" I decided to leave him, but he said: "Instruct me the formula of these testimonies." I went nearer to do as he asked. He asked me to get nearer, and as I did so he made a leap and tore away my ear with his teeth. I cried loudly and abused and cursed him. Then he said: "Of what use are your abuse and curses? When you go to your mother, if she asks who has brought this disaster upon you, tell her it was 'Umayr ibn al-Ahlab ad-Dabbi, the same 'Umayr who was deceived by 'A'ishah, that ambitious woman who wished to become the commander of the faithful."(120)

at-Tabari narrates this story as follows: One of the followers of 'Ali says: In the field of battle I saw a follower of 'A'ishah who was wounded and bloody lying down on the ground, and passing through the last moments of his life, and at the same time softly, murmuring a poem. When he saw me, he said: "Come and instruct me the words of the holy testimony." I approached him and he asked me to what city and people I belonged. I told him I was from Kufah. He asked me to bend my ears nearer to him so that he could hear my words better. I did so, but he suddenly kept up and tore away my ear with his teeth.(121)

Military chants and epics

O al-Azd tribe! Defend your mother; since she is your fastened daily prayer.

An al-Azd man

Ibn Abj al-Hadid al-Mu'tazih quotes he following from al-Mada'ini and al-Waqidi: In the history of wars there none in which so many epic poems and war chants have been composed and recited as in the battle of al-Jamal. Most of these poems and songs were composed by the men of the Banu Dabbah tribe who surrounded 'A'ishah's camel and defended it, and recited those chants to raise the morale of others.

Some of these epic poems of the battle of al-Jamal are as

follows:

1-Ibn Abi al-Hadid quoting al-Mada'ini and al-Waqidi says that the Basra army had surrounded 'A'ishah's camel all singing together:

"O 'A'ishah! O dear mother! Never let fear enter your heart,
For; we encircle you with all our power and strength.
And protect you against all damage and injury
Mother! So long as the world exists,
No power can scatter us from around your camel,
Nor leave you without friends and helpers.
Mother! What power can inflict injury upon you
While skilled warriors encircle you?
These are the brave and strong men of the Hamdan tribe
Who are men of coin bat and heroes of the battlefield,
And men of the Malik tribe whose backs never
Touch the earth, and the men of the al-Azd tribe
Who have never shown weakness and distress
In hardships and wars."[(122)]

2-after quoting the above epic poem, Ibn Abi al-Hadid says:

In the army of Basra a good-looking old man wearing a cloak stood out and addressing the al-Azd tribe with a moving and impressive gesture, said:

"O al-Azd tribe! Help and defend your mother 'A'ishah, since defending her is your fast and deity prayer, and preserving her dignity and respect is a duty and obligation for you all.

You must use all your power and strength to defend her sacred honour, and not allow the enemy to overcome your men. For, if the enemy wins victory, he will bring you captivity and inflict all kinds of injustice and oppression on you, and will not even show pity to your old men and old women. O chivalrous men! O warriors of the al-Azd tribe, may I be dust beneath your feet, be alert and do not disgrace yourselves in this war with defeat and fight!"

Commenting on the above epic oration, al-Waqidi and al-Mada'ini point out that the theme of this boastful oration confirms that part of history which states what Talhah and az-Zubayr uttered to the people of Basra, saying: "Be alert! For, if 'Ali, conquers you, he will destroy you and will leave none of you alive. Defend your realm and your identity. If 'Ali, gains victory,

he will break up the respect of your men, and take your women as captives, and will put your children to the sword. It is your duty to rise up, to defend your honour, and prefer death to disgrace, and fight 'Ali so stubbornly as to drive him out of your land."(123)

Abu Mikhnaf says that the words and epic poems of none of the Basra military poets were as pleasant and stimulating as those of the old man, and no poem was as impressive as his poem to which his attractive fore and fine gestures added force and influence, so that on hearing his words the army of Basra closed their ranks tighter and made their assaults more violent, and showed a greater fortitude and resistance around 'A'ishah's camel!

3-at-Tabarj says: On the day of the al-Jamal battle 'Amr ibn Yathribi aroused and encouraged the men of his Banu_Dabbah tribe, so that each of them held the camel's bridle and fought valiantly, defending their mother, 'A'ishah, and reciting the following poem:

"We are men of the Dabbah tribe and have no fear of the sword and death;
We sever the heads of the enemy soldiers like leaves of trees,
And let their blood flow like a torrent.
O dear mother! Let no fear penetrate your heart,
For; your brave and strong children are around you sword in hand.
o mother! 0 wife of the Prophet of God!
You are the consort of the fountain of blessing, And you are the consort of the leader of humanity. (124)

4-'Awf ibn Qatan, who was another hero of the Dabbah tribe, stood out of 'A'ishah's army and cried out: "0 people! 'Uthman's blood is upon the neck of 'Ali and his sons!" Saying this, he took the bridle of 'A'ishah's camel and started to fight and at the same time recited the following epic lines:

'Mother! Mother! Lam far from home, Wishing neither a grave nor a shroud.
'Awf's resurrection must be held in this desert and battlefield.
And my life must end here, from thence
I shall go to the field of resurrection
If today 'Ali escapes our bloody clutches,

We shall be cheated greatly,
But if we do not destroy his dear al-Hasan and al-Husayn,
We should deserve a death of sorrow and regret."

Singing the above lines, 'Awf made his assault upon 'Ali's army and fought on until he was killed.

5-Abu Mikhnaf says: 'Abd Allah ibn Khalaf al-Khuza'i who was a rich chief of Basra, was in the time of the rule of 'Umar and 'Uthman in charge of the accounts of the public funds, and in the battle of al-Jamal he acted as her soldier and host. He stood out of her army and facing 'Ali's forces, he challenged a champion fighter according to custom. He cried out that no one should accept his challenge but 'Ali, and said: Indeed 'Ali should get ready to fight me so that by his death I may settle the matter and put an end to war and bloodshed. Then he addressed 'Ali saying:

"0 Abu Turab! I have taken one span towards you, So you, too, find courage to get one finger nearer!
0 'Ali! My rancor and hostility to you Weights heavily upon my breast, And the fire of my enmity blazes in my heart!
'Ali! Take a step forward and come a little nearer, come on so that I may quench my heart's fire
With your blood."(125)

'Abd Allah sang out the above lines and kept on challenging 'Ali. So 'Ali stepped forward to fight and with his first stroke of the sword split the crown of his head, scattering his brain and killing him.(126)

The combat of 'Abd Allah and al-Ashtar

Woe upon Asmna' who will mourn for her son!
'A'ishah

at-Tabari quotes 'Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr saying: In the battle of al-Jamal I received thirty-seven sword and spear wounds. Although on that day our army resembled a black mountain in number and seemed invincible, yet we suffered such a defeat

and rout the like of which I know in no war. He adds: In that battle as soon as someone took the bridle of 'A'ishah's camel, he was killed. Although I had received thirty-seven wounds, I had to take her camel's bridle; and when she asked who-I was, I told her I was 'Abd Allah son of az-Zubayr. As 'A'ishah knew that anyone who took the bridle, would not have a safe escape, she cried out involuntarily: "Woe upon my sister Asma' who will sit mourning for her son!"

'Abd Allah says: At this moment my glance fell upon Malik al-Ashtar. I recognized him and came into grips with him. Both of us fell down, and then I shouted: "O people! Kill Malik! Kill him even if it would mean my death, too!"

On hearing my voice, a number of men from both armies gathered around and each group tried to defend its mates. They were engaged in fighting when al-Ashtar and I separated, but there was such a confusion that I could not get hold of the bridle again.

al-Waqidi, too, describes the fight between 'Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr and Malik al-Ashtar as follows: 'Abd Allah entered the field and standing opposite 'Ali's army he challenged a fighter. Malik al-Ashtar stepped forth from 'Ali's army and when these two champions faced one another 'A'ishah asked her attendants who was going to fight 'Abd Allah. They told her it was al-Ashtar. On hearing that name she twisted with pain and cried out: "Woe upon Asma'!" A terrible combat followed between these two valiant and strong warriors, inflicting on each other many wounds with their swords until they could use their swords no more, and so they grappled with each other. Although Malik was older and in state of hunger (since in war he had eaten nothing for three consecutive days) yet he knocked down 'Abd Allah and sat on his chest. At this moment the ranks of both armies broke, and 'Abd Allah's friends rushed to help him, and Malik's supporters hastened to the aid of Malik. 'Abd Allah kept on shouting: "O people! Kill Malik even if I may be killed with his death."

But the battlefield was in such a state of chaos and confusion that the fighters could not recognize each other, so after a rather long struggle 'Abd Allah freed himself from the clutches of Malik al-Ashtar and without continuing the combat retired

from field.

The author of al-'Iqd al-farid quotes 'Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr at the end of that story, saying: "Malik seized and threw me into a pit and said: 'Abd Allah, if it were not for your kinship with the Prophet, I would cut you to pieces."(127)

at-Tabari, quoting 'Alqamah, says: One day I said to Malik al-Ashtar: "How was it that you who did not like 'Uthman's murder, took part in killing thousands of people in the battle of al-Jamal?" He answered: "As 'A'ishah's forces broke their pact with 'Ali after swearing allegiance to him, that perfidy and opposition to 'Ali aroused me to this combat. But Ibn az-Zubayr's guilt was greater than that of others since he incited 'A'ishah to fight 'Ali and also made his father rebel against 'Ali at a time when both 'A'ishah and az-Zubayr intended to abandon fighting. But Ibn az-Zubayr persuaded them to continue the combat. So I prayed to God to let me seize him and punish him for his deed, and God, too, fulfilled my wish. When I came across him in the heat of the battle, I took the opportunity and by standing up on the stirrup of my horse I dealt him a heavy blow of my sword and knocked him down."

One day 'Alqamah asked Malik: Was it 'Abd Allah who cried out in the battle of al-Jamal: "Kill Malik even though I be killed with his death?" Malik answered: "He did not utter this sentences since I did not kill 'Abd Allah, and gave him only one stroke of the sword; for, there was something in my mind which roused my affection for him and caused me to abstain from killing him." Then Malik added: "It was for 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn 'Attab who uttered that sentence about killing both him and Malik even if Malik's death meant his death, too. But there was such a confusion reigning over the battlefield that 'Abd Allah's friends did not recognize me, otherwise they would have killed me.

at-Tabari says in the battle of al-Jamal 'Abd Allah received many injuries and threw himself among the dead soldiers. They found him after the combat ended and treated him for his wounds. Although 'Abd Allah was not killed in the battle of al-Jamal, yet owing to his many injuries and wounds he was deprived of the power if fighting, and thus after Talhah and az-Zubayr the third commander of 'A'ishah's army, too, was

vanquished. But their overthrow did not break the resistance of ‘A’ishah’s army and did not put an end to fighting and bloodshed. For, in this battle all the attention centered on ‘A’ishah’s camel and much blood was shed at its side, since many soldiers were killed around it, and in front of this same camel the heads of many champions and warriors of Basra fell to the ground like autumn leaves. As long as that camel was on its feet and moved on, fighting continued, but with the fall of the camel. the combat, too, came to an end.(128)

The battle at its height

O victorious army! Kill the enemy!

‘A’ishah’s army

O Avengers of ‘Uthmnan’s blood, rise up!

‘A’ishah’s army

at-Tabari says: The right wing of ‘Ali’s army attacked the left wing of ‘A’ishah’s army and a hard combat took place. ‘A‘ishah’s forces, most of whom were of the al-Azd and Dabbah tribes, retreated and took refuge with ‘A’ishah and gathered around her litter.(129)

Abu Mikhnaf says: ‘Ali ordered Malik al-Ashtar to attack the enemy’s left wing, and Malik carried out the order. The ranks of both armies broke, and ‘A’ishah’s soldiers retreated towards ‘A position. After this defeat of the left wing, all the men of the Dabbah, al-Azd ‘Adi Najiyah, Bahilah and the others turned towards ‘A’ishah’s camel and surrounded it to protect it. It was then that the assaults of ‘Ali’s army naturally turned to this point where the combat became intense, resulting in the final defeat of ‘A’ishah’s army.(130)

al-Mada’ini and al-Waqidi, two famous historians, write: The lines and ranks of ‘A’ishah’s army broke with the severe assaults of ‘Ali’s forces and ‘A’ishah’s soldiers gathered around her camel and litter. The men of the al-Azd and Dabbah tribes in particular who formed her main army fought most valiantly. They became the main target of the assaults of ‘Ali’s army and were besieged within a small circle, the axis of which was

‘A’ishah’s camel: In this attack ‘A’ishah’s men offered a strong defense, resulting in a bloody combat, in which many heads and hands were cut off, and many bellies were ripped open. And yet these two tribes swarmed around the camel and fought so stubbornly that, despite this heavy fighting, they did not show the slightest fear, nor was their determination shaken in the least. They acted like an iron wall around ‘A’ishah and the camel, and defended them with all their strength.

At last ‘Ali’s voice rose loudly and, addressing his army, he said: “Woe upon you! Overthrow their banner and cut off the camel’s tendon. It is this devilish camel which has gathered these miserable people around itself So long as that camel is on its feet, bloodshed will continue and none will remain alive! Be quick, and cut the camel’s tendon to end all this killing!”

With ‘Ali’s order the swords were raised higher to attack the center of the circle, and at last the ill-omened camel was thrown down.

Historians say the circle of fighting became narrower and the combat was continued around ‘A’ishah’s camel: The fighters circled so swiftly around it so that they resembled a millstone. The armies deep in number kept on attacking each other, and there echoed the noise and shouts of the people and above all the roar of camel Hattat Majashi’i shouted: “0 people! Defend your mother! Defend ‘A’ishah! Take care of your mother! Your mother is in great danger now.” There was such a fright and panic around the camel that in this chaotic mingling of the crowd each person killed another without knowing him. ‘Ali’s men made repeated assaults and with every assault the people scattered, but again others filled their place. At last ‘Ali cried out: “O people! Shoot the camel and kill that damned animal!” Upon this order many arrows were shot at it and its whole body was covered with them. But as its body had been protected with felt and wood and chain mail, the camel was not hurt, and the arrows penetrated the covers only, so the animal looked like a porcupine.

The slogans of the two armies

When ‘A’ishah’s followers realized the danger and saw their own defeat and ‘Ali’s victory, instead of reciting poems and war

songs they began to shout the slogan of "0 avengers of 'Uthman's blood! Rise up!" 'A'ishah's whole army adopted this slogan and in one voice they cried it again and again.

Meanwhile 'Ali's followers started crying the slogan of "0 Muhammad" but 'Ali ordered them to change the slogan into 'Ya Mansur! Amit!"(131) instead of "0 Muhammad" and the whole army adapted this praise.(132)

The end of the War

Woe upon you! Cut off the tendon of this devilish camel!
Imam 'Ali

A soldier of 'A'ishah's army narrates: "In the battle of al-Jamal a severe defeat and an unprecedented rout were inflicted on us, while 'A'ishah was in her litter and her camel looked like a porcupine on account of the number of arrows shot at it by the enemy."(133)

Abu Mikhnaf says in this connection: Not only was the camel covered with arrows, but 'A'ishah's litter, too, became their target and it looked like another porcupine. When 'Ali noticed that 'A'ishah's camel had become the axis of the combat and much blood was shed at that point and many arms were cut off, he ordered Malik al-Ashtar to go and bring down that illomened camel. For, the people had made it a qibla for themselves and revolved round it as the Ka'bah, and as long as the camel was on its feet, the battle would not end, and so long as it was alive everyone would offer his blood and life.(134)

at-Tabari says: 'Ali shouted from amidst the army: "0 people! Direct your assault towards the camel and bring it down." On his order one of his men penetrated the enemy ranks and reached the camel and dealt it several strokes of the sword. The camel roared so loudly and fearfully that the like of which no one had heard before.

Abu Mikhnaf says in this connection: When 'Ali noticed that all the fighting and bloodshed centered around the camel only and so long as the camel was alive, fighting would continue, he

ordered his men to attack the camel. At that moment the camel’s bridle was held by the men of the Dabbah tribe. So a bloody clash took place between them and ‘Ali’s soldiers, with the result that many men of that tribe were killed. ‘Ali followed by a group of his an-Nakha’i and Hamdani men made more violent, assaults upon that central point and scattered the enemy. At that moment he turned to one of his men called “Bujayr” of the an-Nakha’i, tribe and said: “Bujayr! Now the camel is within your reach. Deal with it!” Bujayr at once brought down his sword on the camel’s thigh.

The camel let out a deep and painful roar and collapsed on its chest. With the fall of the camel, the warriors fled and scattered in every direction like a swarm of locusts, ‘Ali shouted:

“Cut down the ropes attached to the litter and take it away from the camel.” The men did so and carried the litter to one side. Then by ‘Ali’s order the camel was killed, and its carrion was burnt, and the ashes were scattered in the wind.

As this order seemed strange to the people, Imam ‘Ali, relying on the Book of God in support of his order, uttered the following words: “0 people! This camel was an ill-omened and mischievous animal, resembling the calf of the Banu Isra’il, causing dispersion and misfortune among the Muslims, in the same way that the calf did among the children of Israel, So Moses gave the order to burn that calf and throw its ashes into the sea.”

Then the Imam recited the following verse of the Qur’an quoting the words of Moses:

“And look at your god to whose worship you kept so long; we will certainly burn it, then we will certainly scatter it a wide scattering in the sea.(135)

Indeed the root of mischief should be pulled out and burnt.(136)

A few words with 'A'ishah

'A'ishah! I am most hostile kin of yours.
Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr ('A'ishah's brother)

Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr speaks with 'A'ishah

With the defeat of 'A'ishah's army the battle of al-Jamal and the war came to an end. Then 'Ali sent Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr to his sister 'A'ishah, to set up a tent for her and console her and find out whether she had received any injury in the battle.

Muhammad carried out the order and on reaching her litter he put his head inside it. 'A'ishah asked: "Who are you?" Muhammad said: "The closest and yet at the same time the most hostile kin of yours!"

'A'ishah asked: "Are you the son of the al-Khath'amjyah woman?(137) Muhammad said: "Yes." 'A'ishah said: "May my father and mother be sacrificed for you. I thank God that you have come safely out of the war."

al-Mas'udi says: 'Aishah asked his name and he said: "I am Muhammad the same Muhammad who is the nearest of your kins and the most hostile of them to you!" Then he added:

" 'A'ishah! 'Ali offers you his consolation and asks whether you have received any injury in the battle." 'A'ishah answered: "I was struck only by one arrow, but it was not mortal."

'Ali speaks with 'A'ishah

'Ali moves towards 'A'ishah's tent after Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr and stood there by the litter which was near the tent and pointing with a stick to it, he said: "0 Humayra'! Had the Prophet of God ordered you to start this sedition and shed the blood of the Muslims? Had your husband not instructed you not to leave your house? 'A'ishah! Those who have brought you here have been unfair to the Prophet, They have made their own women to stay at home, but they have taken you to the battlefield who have been the Prophet's wife and honour and one of the exalted women of Islam."

at-Tabari says in this connection: Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr took his sister 'A'ishah to one side away from the army and pitched a tent for her, 'Ali came and stood behind the tent and

spoke a few words with her, saying: " 'A'ishah! You incited the people to rise against me, and sowed the seeds of enmity with me in their hearts until they started riots and bloodshed."

'A'ishah remained silent, for, she had no answer to give. She uttered only the following sentence: "0 'Ali! Now that you have defeated us and found power and authority, it is better to forgive."

'Ammar speaks with 'A'ishah

at-Tabari and Ibn al-Athir say: When the war ended 'Ammar met 'A'ishah and said: " 'A'ishah! You were far removed from God's order! You opposed Him in Leaving your house contrary to your pact with the Prophet, and in coming to the battlefield, What a difference between the corner of the house and a battlefield!" 'A'ishah asked: "Are you Abu al-Yaqzan who is so outspoken to me?" He said: 'Yes." 'A'ishah said: "Indeed, since you have known yourself, you have uttered nothing but the truth!" 'Ammar said: "God be praised for helping you to utter a truth in my favour!"(138)

Pardon after victory

We respect them because of the word of monotheism, which they utter.

Imam 'Ali

General amnesty

'Ali's army was victorious and completely dominated the enemy's forces, which were routed and took to flight. At that time, 'Ali gave the order to have again recited to his soldiers the text of his order and charter, which had been read to them before. The public-crier read out the following proclamation to the people in the field of battle: "0 people! Do not kill the enemy's wounded; do not pursue the fugitives; do not reproach the repentant. When an enemy soldier lays down his arms. he is placed under grace, and secure with his life, and he must not be hurt."

Here 'Ali ordered to have added a very concise,

comprehensive and humane sentence to the charter and to be announced to the people, namely that all the fighters of the enemy army, whether black or white, and whether men or women are secure and no one has the right to molest them.

Thus with this brief sentence ‘Ali set everyone free and guaranteed a general amnesty, thereby showing his nobility of character and giving the benefit of it to all.

The author of Kanz al-’ummal says: When the battle ended the same charter was, by ‘All’s order, recited to the army for the second time, but this time some sentences were added to it, namely: “O People! You have no legitimate right to encroach upon the honour and property of the enemy. You can only seize from them the things that they have brought to the battlefield to fight. You must leave the rest of their property for themselves and their heirs. Outside the battlefield do not take anyone of the enemy as captive, and do not plunder their wealth and property. Their property must be divided in accordance with the verdict of the Qur’an among their children and heirs.”

Again by ‘Ali’s order it was declared to the army not to marry the enemy’s women who had lost their husbands in the war unless they allowed the lapse of four months and ten days, like other Muslims, in consideration for their lost husbands. Then they are free to marry them. ‘Ali’s purpose was that after the war the enemy should be treated like other Muslims and they should be dealt with according to Islamic verdicts, since ‘Ali considered them to be different from infidels and heathens in whose case a different verdict was applicable.

The people’s protest and ‘Ali’s answer

The method adopted by ‘Ali towards the treatment of the enemy after the war was met with protest by a group in his own army. They came to him in protest, saying: “0 ‘Ali! Yesterday you told us to regard shedding the blood of these people legitimate, but today you forbid us from seizing their women and property!”

In answer to them ‘Ali said: “The Islamic verdict about those who believe in the equal and those who believe in the words about God’s uniqueness and express their faith in Islam is the verdict of which I have carried out about them.”

But some of these objectors were not satisfied with the above

answer and continued their opposition. In order to convince them 'Ali said: "0 people! Now that you insist on treating the enemy like heathens and infidels, let us draw lots for 'A'ishah who was the chief and commander of this army, so that the person who wins the lot may carry her away and keep her a slave like other infidel women."

Here the objectors realized the purpose of 'Ali's order and regretted and repented their protests. In this way 'Ali silenced them by means of reasoning and by reliance on their conscience. But to clarify the matter further, he offered another argument and said: "As the people in 'A'ishah's army seem to worship God and testify to the uniqueness of God, I respect them for the sake of that belief and that word of testimony to God's uniqueness and I will treat them like Muslims, and regard their children as the heirs of their father."

The author of Kanz al-'ummal narrates this story as follows:

After the war ended, 'Ali delivered a sermon to his army, and then 'Ammar ibn Yasir rose and said: "0 Amir al-Mu'minin! The people have some protests to you about the enemy's property and claim that in fighting any people or nation and winning victory, they can seize their property as spoils of war and take their women and children as captives."(139)

Before *'Ali* could answer 'Ammar ibn Yasir, one of the army men, named 'Ibad Ibn Qays who was of the house of Bakr ibn Wa'il and was a well-spoken and eloquent man, rose and, addressing 'Ali, said: "O commander of the faithful! I swear to God that you did not truly observe equality and fairness in dividing the property of the Basra people."

'Ali answered: "Woe upon you! How can you say that I have not treated you fairly and equally?"

The man said: "Because you forbade us from seizing any property of the Basra people except what we had secured in the field of battle, and you also forbade us from seizing their women and children."

In order to convince all the protesters, 'Ali addressed 'Ibad Ibn Qays and said: "Bakri brother! Are you unfamiliar with the laws of Islam? Do you not have fathers? We cannot on the pretext that their fathers fought us, take their children as captives and make them our slaves.

As for the enemy’s wealth and women, the property that these people possess was gained by them at a time when they were not at war with us and not hostile to us, and when they were Muslims. And the day they chose the women as their wives, their marriage was effected in accordance with. the command of God and the Islamic ways. As for their children, they have been born Muslims. Therefore, in view of these explanations the verdict of Islam about their property, women and children is exactly what I have declared to you.

Out of their property you can only keep as spoils what you have secured in the field of battle and in their camps, and confine yourselves and to their children. If someone engages in war and opposition to us, we punish only him, and do not attribute his guilt to anyone else, and do not even consider his children liable to reproof and punishment, Bakri brother!

I have followed the step of the Prophet of God, and as to the people of Basra and those who have rebelled against me and started bloodshed and fratricide, I have adopted the way which was chosen by the Prophet on the day of the capture of Mecca towards the people of that city. He restored the property of the Meccan people with the exception of that which had been seized as spoils of war from the enemy army.” ‘Ali then added: “Bakri brother! Do you not know that Dar al-Harb (House of War) which means the city that is the residence of infidels, and Dar al-Hijrat (House of migration) which is the dwelling place of the Muslims are greatly different from each other from the viewpoint of Islamic laws? For, in Dar al-Harb in the time of war with infidels whatever is seized of their property, belongs to the Muslims altogether, whereas in Dar al-Hijrat in the time of war with monotheists or with those who testify to God’s uniqueness, all their property belongs to themselves except that which is seized in the battlefield.

May God bless you! Be tranquil and avoid the way of protest and opposition, and insist not on taking ‘A‘ishah’s soldiers as captive, otherwise you will have to answer one question of mine, namely, which of you is willing to have ‘A’ishah as his share of war prisoners and carry her to his house as a captive and slave?”

When ‘All uttered the last sentence there rose an uproar from the army, all of them crying out: “0 ‘All! None of us would

wish to do so, and none will dare to commit such an insolence to the Prophet of God as to take his consort as a slave. 0 commander of the faithful! You are proceeding on the right path in your action. It is we who have been guilty of error in our protest to you. 0 'Ali! Your action based on knowledge, and our objection was due to ignorance. Now we repent our guilt and are penitent of our protests. May God lead us to welfare and happiness through you!"

'Ammar ibn Yasir stood up for the second time and, addressing the soldiers, said: "0 people! Follow 'Ali and carry out his order! I swear to God that he adopts the way of the Prophet in all matters and never deviates from his course and conduct. 'Ali proceeds the same way which was taken by the Prophet of God, and the Prophet has entrusted him with all the Muslims' affairs and granted him the power of acting as judge amidst the people. He introduced him as Aaron son of Imran who acted as deputy for Moses. He said: 0 *'Ali!* In relation to me you are like Aaron in relation to Moses, with this difference that after me no other Prophet will be ordained. 0 people! This is a great distinction, which belongs to 'Ali only!"

'Ammar's words ended here, and once more 'Ali began to speak and, addressing the people, he said: "Obey what I told you and carry Out my order, for, if you do so, I will lead you with the aid of God to the right path, eternal happiness and heavens, even though in this course we will be faced with hardships, bitterness and failures.

As for 'A'ishah, her inner complexes towards me roused her to hurt me, whereas she would not treat. others in that way. Nevertheless now I show her respect and goodness as I have done in the past and leave her to God for him to deal with her good and bad deeds.

It is God who decides to punish everyone for his guilt and sin or to pardon him." At this point the followers of the Imam exclaimed: "Your are in the right." And they became penitent for their vain protests to him, and after long arguments about this matter, at last they confirmed the Imam's view and in obedience to his order and in apology they said: "O commander of the faithful! We swear to God that all you said about the division of the property of the enemy's army, has been the

Verdict of God, and our protest to your just decision was due to our ignorance. How fortunate it was that in our protest we did not resort to improper words that might hurt your feelings said nothing contrary to your satisfaction!"

Ibn Yasaf who was of 'Ali's army and a man of talent and eloquence, composed a poem about this matter the translation of which in prose is as follows:

"O people! The view you expressed about the people of Basra was based on ignorance, and your opinion was wrong for, the consort of the Prophet of God cannot take the form of spoils of war, nor could she be made a slave in a house like other war captives, since such an action is far removed from conscience and has its source in shortsightedness and mental deviation.

Therefore today you must accept what 'Ali says and abandon secret, talks and hidden protests and whispers. Act upon 'Ali's view and order, and do not plunder the enemy's property in their houses nor take possession of it. But.what is legitimate for you to keep as spoils of war, are military weapons, clothes, quadrupeds and other commodities that you have secured from the enemy in the field of battle, and you must be satisfied with this legitimate share of the spoils.

0 people! 'A'ishah is your mother, too, even though her sins are greater and her blunders plentiful. She must be respected for the sake of the Prophet of God, and it is our duty to show respect to her and preserve her honour and prestige."[140]

Why 'Ali fought Talhah and az-Zubayr

I was afraid that Talhah and az-Zubayr might enslave the servants of God.

Imam 'Ali

After Ibn Yasaf finished his recitation of the poem, a man stood up from among the soldiers and asked why *'Ali* had decided to fight Talhah and az-Zubayr.

'Ali answered: "I decided to fight them because they violated their allegiance to me and killed the good and innocent servants

of God. They unjustly shed the blood of Hakim ibn Jabalah and the guards of Basra and the sentinels of the treasury. How is it possible that a group should stubbornly and unjustly shed the blood of innocent people and their leader should not rise to defend them? The way I adopted with Talhah and az-Zubayr is not confined to me; for, if they had resorted to such a perfidy, riot and bloodshed in the time of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, they, too, would have risen in defense and fought them. 0 people! Even now there are some companions of the Prophet amongst this crowd to testify to the truth that, whoever refused allegiance to Abu Bakr he and 'Umar both threatened him with the sword and brought him under their allegiance, and forced him again to obey the government of the time. During the time of the first caliph some people refused allegiance to him and continued to do so even after the Ansar swore allegiance, but very soon pressure was exerted upon them and they were compelled to obey, and although that allegiance was not based on willingness, they respected their pact and continued to respect it right to the end. But what choice had I? Talhah and az-Zubayr freely and willingly swore allegiance to me. And yet they violated their pact soon after.

They desired the emirate of Basra and Yemen, but when I realized their intense desire for these posts, I abstained from agreeing to their appointment as governor of those cities. Moreover, their hearts were filled with the love of wealth and excess, and they coveted Muslim's property, and intended to enslave their men and women and plunder their wealth. Experience had proved al this to me and made me fight them and cut their hands from the life and property of the Muslims and liberate the Muslims from their corruption and wickedness." Then 'Ali addressed the people of Basra and reproached them for their ugly and hypocritical deeds and said:

"O people! You were the soldiers and followers of a tongue-tied animal who began your riots with his voice and intensified your assaults. When that animal lost his voice and rolled down on the ground, you took to your heels and fled from the battlefield."

‘A’ishah returns to Medina

‘A’ishahl ‘Ali’s order is that you should return to your city.
Ibn ‘Abbas

The war ended and general amnesty was declared, and the spoils of war which had been seized from the enemy in the field of battle, were divided amongst ‘Ali’s army. Arguments came to an end, noise and murmurs died down, and conditions returned to normal. Then ‘Ali summoned his cousin, ‘Abd Allah ibn al‘Abbas and said to him: “‘Abd Allah! Go to ‘A’ishah and speak to her secure her satisfaction and make her return to her city.”

Ibn ‘Abbas says: “I went to ‘A’ishah and asked permission to enter to deliver ‘Ali’s message. She would not admit me, so I entered her tent without permission, and placed a mat in a corner and sat down.”

‘A’ishah said: “Ibn ‘Abbas I swear to God that I have seen none like you to ignore the orders of the Prophet as you do. You have entered our abode without permission and have sat down on our mat without our leave.”

According to another narration ‘A’ishah said: “Ibn ‘Abbas! In two respects you have erred, and opposed the words of the Prophet. For, firstly you have sat on my carpet without my permission!”

Ibn ‘Abbas said: “You have learnt the injunctions from us, and yet do you now teach us the Verdict of God? Now ‘Ali Emir of Mu’minin, orders you to return to your land and city.”

‘A’ishah said: “May God bless ‘Umar who was the Emir of the faithful.”

Ibn ‘Abbas said: “Yes, but today ‘Ali is the Emir of the faithful.”

‘A’ishah said: “No! No! I will never accept him to the emirate, and I refuse to obey him.”

Ibn ‘Abbas said: “Those times have passed and the time when you appointed and dismissed people has gone by. Today your vote and words have no worth or influence, and your approval and disapproval are one and the same.

Ibn ‘Abbas says: “When I uttered these words ‘A’ishah began

to cry so profusely that I could hear her groans."[141] Then she said: "'Abd Allah! I am prepared to return to my city. I have no desire to stay where you are, for, the most hostile city is the one where you stay."

Ibn 'Abbas said: "'A'ishah! I swear to God that the reward of the goodness of us, Banu Hashim to you was not for you to rise against us. For, it was we who made you the mother of the faithful, and gave your father the title of "True Friend"."

'A'ishah said: " 'Abd Allah! You boast of the Prophet before me. And by his name, you take pride and glory over me?"

'Abd Allah said: "Verily, we take pride in the existence of someone who if he was from your household, then you too would have taken pride over us."

Ibn 'Abbas said: "After conversing with 'A'ishah, I approached Imam 'Ali and informed him about my talks with 'A'ishah. He kissed my forehead and said: Long live the household where in faculty of speech and in power of repartee they are one and the same."

Ibn A'tham al-Kufi narrates in "Futuh al-buldan" as such:

After the end of the battle, 'Ali mounted a mule that belonged to the Prophet and proceeded towards the provisional dwelling of 'A'ishah in Basra, and after receiving permission he entered and saw 'A'ishah with a number of Basra women sitting around weeping and groaning.

At that moment Safjyah, daughter of al-Harith athThaqafi [142] and several other women turned to 'Ali and said: "O 'Ali! You killed our friends and dear ones, and dispersed our group. May God make your children orphans, in the same way that you made the children of 'Abd Allah ibn Khalaf orphans, and brought tears to our eyes at his loss!"

Imam 'Ali recognized Safiyah and said in answer: "Safiyah! I don't blame you for this enmity, since in the battle of Badr, I killed your grandfather, and in the battle of Uhud your uncle. And in this battle your husband. If I were a killer of your friends and dear ones, I would kill all these who are assembled as friends in this house."

Then Imam 'Ali said to 'A'ishah: "'A'ishah! Why do you not keep your dogs away from me? Remember that if I were not interested in the good and welfare of the people, I could at this

very moment drive out every one of those who have hidden themselves in this house, and behead them."[143]

Ibn A'tham say: At this point 'A'ishah and the other women became silent and were unable to utter a word. Then Imam 'Ali addressed 'A'ishah and spoke reproachingly to her as follows:

'A'ishah! God had ordered you to stay in your house? and preserve yourself from strangers. But you have opposed this command of God Almighty. and smeared your hands with the blood of Muslims and incited the people against me. And unjustly started a war with me. Where as you and your house have attained honour and dignity through you, and us were given the position of 11mm al-Mu'min by our house. 'A'ishah! Now you must get ready to depart and return to the house where the Prophet had settled you in and stay there until your death' Saying this, 'Ali left.

Ibn A'tham says: The next day 'Ali sent his son al-Hasan al-Mujtaba to 'A'ishah where he said: "'A'ishah! My father Amir al-Mu'minjn says: I swear to God, Who split the seed and I swear to God, Who created mankind, that if you do not depart at once for Medina, I shall be forced to do that which I do not want to do."

When 'A'ishah heard this warning, she immediately rose to get ready for departure. One of the women, noticing 'A'ishah's haste, asked: "'A'ishah! 0 Umm al-Mu'minin! 'Abd Allah ibn al'Abbas came to you and asked you to depart for Medina, but you refused his proposal and raised your voice and Ibn 'Abbas left in anger. Then 'Al came to you, and you did not exhibit the slightest anxiety. But when this young man to you and delivered his father's message, you showed great deal of anxiety, and at once accepted what he said!"

'A'ishah answered: "Yes, my anxiety was due to the fact that this young man is a son and souvenir of the Prophet of God and a symbol of the fine qualities of that great man, and his face reminded me of the visage of the Prophet. Anyone, who wishes to see what the Prophet looked like, should glance at the visage of this youth. Moreover he was carrying a message from his father which deeply frightened me and forced me to depart."

The woman became more curious to find out the true reason, so she said: " 'A'ishah! I beg you in the name of God Almighty to

tell me what was in ‘Ali’s message that affected you so deeply as to be so worried?”

‘A’ishah said: Woe upon you! In one of the wars some precious objects were brought to the Prophet, and he divided them all among his friends and companions. We, consorts of the Prophet, asked him to give us a share and insisted upon it to the extent that ‘Ali became angry and reproached us, saying: “It is enough! It is enough! You have hurt the feelings of the Prophet of God!” We began to argue with *‘Ali* and spoke rudely and sharply to him. ‘Ali recited this verse of the Qur’an.

‘Maybe, his Lord, if he divorce you, will give him in your place wives better than you.”(144)

“We were greatly enraged at this, and became ruder and coarser. Then we saw signs of anger in the face of the Prophet, and he turned to ‘Ali and said: “O ‘Ali! Let me give you the authority to divorce my wives, so that with each divorce the relation between me and her would be severed.” The Prophet did not fix a definite time for this proxy, and this right always remains valid for *‘Ali* so that he can divorce the Prophet’s wives by proxy whenever he wants, and bring about separation between us and the Proplaet. So what ‘Ali meant by his message was a warning to divorce me if I did not depart soon, and to deprive me of the position of Umm al-Mu’minin.(145)

The author of al-’Iqd al-farjd says: After these likes when ‘A’ishah agreed to return to Medina ‘Ali provided her with the necessary travel equipment, and dispatched her in the company of forty or seventy women to Medina.

at-Tabarj, says: ‘Au provided ‘A’ishah with the best travel equipment, and granted her a sum of twelve thousand drachmas, and dispatched her in the company of a number of men and women to Medina. As ‘Abd Allah ibn Ja’far (146) thought the above sum inadequate, he gave her another considerable sum and said: “If Imam ‘Ali does not agree to the payment of this sum, I will pay it out of my own wealth.”

al-Mas’udi remarks about ‘A’ishah’s return: ‘Ali ordered ‘Abd ar-Rahman ibn Abi Bakr to accompany ‘A’ishah his sister, to Medina together with thirty noble women of the tribes of ‘Abd Qays and Hamdan.

al-Ya’qubi and Ibn A’tham, too, mention this point in their

history with the difference that they do not mention the name of ‘Abd ar-Rahman.[147]

The ill-omened results of the battle of al-Jamal

In the battle of al-Jamal more than thirty thousand Muslims were killed.

al-Ya’qubi

The ill-omened results of the battle of al-Jamal and the unpleasant after effects, which came by gradually, are really astonishing.

Historians write about it as follows: In the battle of al-Jamal the two armies shot so many arrows at one another that their supply was totallyexhausted, and they pierced so many chests with their spears and killed so many men that if horses had galloped in the battlefield, their hooves would have touched nothing but the corpses of the Muslims.

A man who actually took part in that battle says: “After the battle of al-Jamal whenever I visited Dar al-Walid in Basra, a place where women wash clothes, the sound of the sticks used by them remind me of the swords and spears in that battle.”[148]

In the previous pages we have narrated the words of historians about this battle as to how heads were severed from bodies, hands were cut and bellies were ripped. The figure of those who received injuries, and the number of severed arms, and blinded eyes is more than can be imagined. at-Tabari finds the number of the dead at six thousand, but Ibn A’tham says in his history book that, the number of those killed totaled nine thousand in ‘A’ishah’s army, and seven thousand and five hundred in ‘Ali’s army.

Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih writes in al-’Iqd al-farid that in the battle of al-Jamal twenty thousand followers of ‘A’ishah were killed, and five hundred of ‘Ali’s army.

The history book of al-Ya’qubi says that the number of those killed in both armies in the battle of al-Jamal, was more than thirty thousand.[149]

Thus in this battle much economical loss many mental and physical sufferings were inflicted on both sides. Many a woman lost her sons or became a widow, and many children became orphans. All these losses and damages were inflicted on the Islamic society in a limited area, but the damages and evil consequences of this war gradually appeared after the battle during many long subsequent years, and involved many part of the Islamic realm and the majority of the Muslims, about which no figure can be given. We can only quote some pages of history related to this matter for the reader and enumerate some of those consequences.

Subsequent results

1-One of the bitter results of the battle of al-Jamal was the kindling of the fire of the Siffin battle, for this battle served as a complement to the former battle and one of its ill-omened vestiges. These two battles were connected together with a firm cord, one end of which Basra was tied and the other end Siffin the middle of which was in 'A'ishah's hand, pulling both ends together.

For, the uprising of 'A'ishah who was of the Taym house and had no kinship with 'Uthman, paved the way for the uprising of Mu'awiyah who was of the Umayyads and related to 'Uthman and gave him a pretext. For, if alien 'A'ishah could rise to avenge 'Uthman's blood, then Mu'awiyah could on the basis of his kinship with 'Uthman and his priority find a better excuse and claim vengeance for 'Uthman's blood, and thus start the battle of Siffin against 'Ali.

2-The uprising of 'A'ishah to avenge 'Uthman's blood had the result that Mu'awiyah made the caliphate hereditary in his house of Umayyads, which was also the house of the assassinated caliph, so that its transfer to another house became impossible.

3-The unpleasant consequences of the battle of al-Jamal did not end with the end of the battle of Siffin. These two battles joined together to produce a third battle called the battle of an-Nahrawan, in which again a number of Muslims were killed.

The first two battles left bad impressions in the minds of shortsighted and cynical people, so that they were constantly in

a state of anxiety, doubt and indecision, and regarded one another with suspicion and enmity. They excommunicated ost of the Muslims and considered killing them permissible. They resorted to brigandage and deprived the Muslims of security and tranquility, and started many clashes and conflicts, the scope of which lasted until the time of the Abbasid caliphs, and cost many Muslims their lives.

Thus it is clear that the battle of al-Jamal was not confined to the events, which took place in the limited zone of Basra and ended within a brief period. It continued to exist and was dragged on to many parts of the Islamic realm and involved a large number of Muslims, and lasted very long amongst them under various names other than the battle of al-Jamal.

The rise of intellectual differences

Despite all that bloodshed 'A'ishah will continue to enjoy our respect, but her account is with God.

Imam 'Ali

War and bloodshed usually leave behind all kinds of differences of ideology and reaction amongst a nation and society; for, actual practical differences naturally produce intellectual and ideological differences.

The battles of al-Jamal, Siffin and Nahrawan were no exception to this natural rule, and each of them produced in its turn a number of harmful effects in the mind and spirit of the Muslims and caused wide divisions and intense ideological differences. From the point of view of belief, and thought, after these wars the people were divided into three groups: A number supported 'Ali and formed the Alawite group.(150)

Another group supported 'Uthman and formed the 'Uthman party, A third group excommunicated the other two groups, while another number stood aloof and called themselves neutrals. In this way each group formed a party having a particular name for which it became known.

As a result of the internal wars various beliefs, creeds and

ways rose among the Muslims, and these ideological differences which had their roots in the wars, sometimes led to other violent and bloody disputes, and sometimes instead of producing hot clashes and massacres, took the form of a cold war of arguments, and verbal disputes and quarrels, all of which were due to the battle of al-Jamal and its subsequent evil results.(151) Thus in addition to the harmful results, some of which we mentioned in the last chapter, the battle of al-Jamal caused the greatest tensions and struggles among various Muslim masses.

The Khawarij (outsiders) believed that since Talhah, az-Zubayr and ‘A’ishah rose to fight ‘All and oppose his leadership, therefore they became infidels and went out of Islam, because on that day ‘Ali was in the right, but be, too, in the battle of Siffin agreed to arbitration and signed the verdict of Abu Musa and ‘Amr ibn al-’As and consequently he, too, went out of the faith of Islam.

Another group of Khawarij regarded ‘Ali as rightful in the battle of al-Jamal, but since he did not seize all the property of the people of Basra and did not enslave their women and children after the victory, they criticized his ways and cursed him.(152)

A number of the Mu’tazilah regarded both groups as unbelievers, and considered both armies of ‘Ali and ‘A’ishah as outside Islam and believed that their eternal place was the fire of hell.(153)

Another group of the Mu’tazilah regarded one of the two groups (without determining which of them) as debauchees deserving fire, and claimed that though both groups were guilty and sinful, only one group deserved fire and only God must determine which. According to this group the martyrdom of none of the soldiers of these two armies is not acceptable, and they declared, that if all the armies of ‘Ali and ‘A’ishah were to give testimony for a leaf of vegetable, that testimony would be rejectable and unreliable.(154)

A third group of the Mu’tazilah believed that the whole army including even Talhah and az-Zubayr were sinful and inmates of fire except those who repented their sin. Por, after the war ‘A‘ishah went to ‘Ali and confessed her sin and asked his

forgiveness, and 'Ali pardoned her and connived at her guilt and blunders.[155]

al-Jahiz says: Some people's view about the armies of 'Ali and 'A'ishah has been that, the leaders received salvation, but their followers are inmates of fire.[156]

A large number of the Ash'ariyah believed in relation to 'A'ishah's army that they were guilty in their uprising and in. opposition to 'Ali and committed a sin, but this sin does not make them infidel and immoral, their blunder should not justify enmity to them, since it is a small error which is pardonable since everyone is likely to be involved with such errors.[157]

Another group of Ash'ariyah believed that 'Ali and 'A'ishah had committed no sin and they cannot be considered guilty of immorality. Therefore their deed should not be criticized, since both groups engaged in uprising and war on the basis of conviction, except that they erred in their conviction.

Thus we see that many different and contradictory views have appeared about 'Ali and 'A'ishah and those who took part in the battle of al-Jamal, so that their deed is sometimes taken to the extent of unbelief, and sometimes it is regarded as virtuous and deserving heaven.

But in our opinion the best view and statement is expressed by 'Ali who said: "Despite all that dispersion and bloodshed, 'A'ishah deserves our respect and respect of all Muslims, but her account of deeds is with God."[158]

Familiarity with the true character of 'A'ishah

'A'ishah is sitting in her litter and acting as commander of her army.

Text of the book

In narrating the history of the battle of al-Jamal we described only the points, which are directly or indirectly related to our objective, namely the evaluation of 'A'ishah's traditions, that is to say those which exhibit her moral and spiritual characteristics. These points have been selected from both,

books of history and reliable sources, and are placed at the disposal of readers in order to acquaint them more clearly with the true personality, social and political power of ‘A‘ishah, and her moral, mental and spiritual qualities. For, the familiarity with her personality helps us greatly in our main objective, which is the evaluation of her traditions and narrations, and to some extent paves the way for us to discover the truth.

Now what we have obtained about ‘A’ishah from historical sources will be described briefly in the succeeding chapters, but in this chapter we deal with the stout-heartedness of ‘A’ishah which is one of her distinctive qualities making her outstanding amongst her sex.

‘A’ishah’s self-assurance

‘A’ishah was unrivalled among the women of the world for her stout heart and self-assurance, so that up to now history has not shown her peer in this quality.

She was so much in control of her womanly feelings and emotions that it was unbelievable. In the battle of al-Jamal, in the first phase when she captured the city of Basra and arrested the guards of the treasury, she ordered most cruelly and coolly to have all of them massacred, and thus by her order many tens of Muslims were butchered like sheep.

Later on, when the battle started, she herself took part in that fiery and bloody combat without showing the slightest fear and without losing her coolness and balance. She issued commands like an experienced commander. When heads fell from the bodies like autumn leaves, and bellies were ripped open and severed arms were thrown up in the air, she observed them all without the slightest frown, and sat like a grand rock in her litter, playing her part as a leader and commander, issuing successive orders, unlike any other woman Would the reader call it stout-heartedness or cruelty? We leave it to the reader to judge on the testimony of history.

‘A’ishah as the most statesman-like woman of the world

‘A’ishah! The roaring waves of all these riots are due to you.

‘Ammar

From what we narrated in the previous chapter, it is clear that ‘A’ishah possessed an extraordinary personality, a natural magical power and strength, With such a quality it was very easy for her to present right as wrong and wrong as right, and to give reality to what was non-existent by means of her dexterity and make-belief.

She had extraordinary creative power, skill in politics, and scene-making, It was by means of this power that she succeeded in making a large number of people violate their pact with ‘Ali despite their previous allegiance, and rebel against him, and collect a large army in the name of avenging ‘Uthman’s blood even though he was killed by her order, and mobilize that army to fight ‘Ali.

It is amazing that ‘A’ishah with this strange statesmanship was able in the battle of al-Jamal to bring together contrary ideas and concentrate them in one place. She was able unite various groups and parties each having different goals into one single front.

Even more amazing is the fact that she managed to present Talhah and az-Zubayr as avengers of ‘Uthman’s blood despite the fact that they were the most stubborn enemies of ‘Uthman and were his real assassins. She persuaded them to violate their pact with ‘Ali despite their previous allegiance, and made them the emir and commander of an army that had risen against *‘Ali* to avenge ‘Uthman’s blood.

‘A’ishah did not only exonerate ‘Uthman’s assassins but also accused ‘Ali of his murder, whereas according to the living evidence of history, ‘Ali did not have any part in ‘Ubhman’s assassination at all, some of which testimony we will cite here from history:

1-’Ali often spoke of the allegiance of Taihah and az-Zubayr and their perfidy, and of the fact that he himself had no part in

'Uthman's murder and that it was these two who smeared their evil deed. He repeated these points protestingly. Often he said that Talhah and az-Zubayr swore allegiance to him and soon after they asked his leave to go on pilgrimage to the House of God, but they emerged in Basra where they started their riot, killed the Muslims and violated their pact with him, inciting his enemies against him and doing their worst, At times he addressed Talhah and az-Zubayr, saying: You swore allegiance to me and then violated it and accused me of 'Uthman's assassination, You claim that 'Ali is 'Uthman's assassin. But I say: let us leave the judgment about this matter to the impartial companions of the Prophet, not to your supporters or mine. Yes, let the former individuals judge this matter, and when they introduce the assassin, whether it is you or me, let them determine the punishment fitting the crime. 'Ali often referred to this subject in Muslim gatherings and exonerated himself with strong arguments.

Moreover, on the day the people swore allegiance to 'Ali, his non-participation in 'Uthman's murder, and Talhah's and az-Zubayr's participation in it were quite clear to every one.

And yet, despite all that clear evidence which exonerated *'Ali* from complicity in 'Uthman's death, some people ignored his claim. But they accepted and confirmed 'A'ishah's words of accusation despite all her false reasoning. This was due only to the particular skill, which 'A'ishah had in altering and misrepresenting the truth, helped by her popularity and social position gained in the rule of the two elder caliphs.

2-Ibn Sirin says about the exoneration of 'Ali from 'Uthm an's death: "So long as the people had not sworn allegiance to 'Ali, he was not accused of 'Uthman's death, but as soon as allegiance was sworn to him, the accusation was started and he was charged with 'Uthman's murder."

3-Abu al-Aswad ad-Du'ali said fo Talhah and az-Zubayr in the battle of al-Jamal:

"You two and 'A'ishah were the most headstrong enemies of 'Uthman and more than anyone else, incited the people to his murder. So you should now rise against yourself in avenging his blood since you are his real murderers.

You claim that the question of caliphate should be given

back to the council. With what impudence do you utter such a claim? Was it not you who with perfect willingness and without the slightest disinclination swore allegiance to ‘Ali?”

4-Before the battle started, ‘Ammar visited ‘A’ishah and said to her: ‘A’ishah! All the seditions have been started by you, and in every event the signs of your participation are evident. Even ‘Uthman’s death occurred with your signal and order.

5-Before the battle began ‘Abd Allah ibn Hakim showed a letter to Talhah and asked: “Was this letter not from you, Talhah?” Talhah said that it was. ‘Abd Allah said: “I am surprised that, as this letter shows, yesterday you invited us to rise against ‘Uthman and kill him or depose him from the caliphate, But we refused this invitation and gave no positive answer. However, you joined hands yourselves and killed him, and today you come to us to avenge his blood, and claim that blood from us, innocent people who have no knowledge of it.”

6-After the departure of ‘A’ishah’s army from Mecca, Sa’id ibn al-’As who was of the Umayyads and a cousin of ‘Uthman, said to Marwan: “Where are you going, and from whom do you claim ‘Uthman’s blood? ‘Uthman’s blood is now in your own friends and then return home.”

All these are strong and clear evidence that perfectly acquit ‘Ali from participation in ‘Uthman’s death, and prove to everyone the complicity of Talhah and az-Zubayr in that assassination. Nevertheless ‘A’ishah employed her skill and cleverness to acquit herself and her accomplices from this crime, and present herself and them as supporters of ‘Uthman and avengers of his blood. She accused innocent people especially ‘Ali who had taken no part at all in that crime, calling him ‘Uthman’s assassin, and then collected and equipped an army to fight ‘Ali in the name of avenging ‘Uthman’s blood, thus starting one of the biggest wars in history.

This was an amazing stunt, which was not possible for everyone. Therefore, it must be said that ‘A’ishah was one of the most statesman-like and scene-making women of the world.

‘A’ishah’s power of oratory

O ‘Ali now in your victory grant pardon!

‘A’ishah

‘A’ishah possessed a particular skill in oratory, and was closely familiar with the technique of eloquent speech, so that she may be considered as one of the most famous orators of the world. Her fiery and fluent addresses, which are quoted in the books of history, are really amazing. Now as a supporter of this claim we cite some examples of her orations which were delivered during her travel to Basra.

1-Some of ‘A’ishah’s remarks are the answers given to Umm Salamah when she reproached ‘A’ishah who intended to start a war against ‘Ali, saying: “The course you have adopted is wrong and sinful. Fear God who observes all your deeds.”

‘A’ishah answered: “Umm Salamah! What a fine journey is ahead of me! For, in this journey I will change their disunion and enmity into sincerity and brotherhood. I will thus conciliate two groups of Muslims who are separated by intense differences and God’s satisfaction.” In this way ‘A’ishah used her oratorical power and skill in make-believe to answer Umm Salamah with sophistry, and cover her evil intention with an appearance of conciliation and winning God’s approval, and pretended to conceal her rancor and creation of dispersion under the cover of peace-making, alliance and brotherhood.

But the question is: If ‘A’ishah had kept to her house and abstained from fighting ‘Ali, where was that hostility between the two groups of which she spoke of? What were the two antagonistic parties, which ‘A’ishah intended to conciliate? Before ‘A’ishah’s uprising and her journey to Basra there was no sign of any division and difference. How fortunate. It would have been if she had not departed from Mecca for Basra for the so-called conciliation, and if she had not started all that conflict and bloodshed among the Muslims!

2-Another example of ‘A’ishah’s oration is the famous speech she delivered at al-Mirbad. On that occasion Talhah and az-Zubayr addressed the people of Basra, but no one listened to them, the people began to clamor and protest so much so that

Talhah and az-Zubayr failed to calm them down. Here 'A'ishah stepped forth and delivered such a fiery oration that silenced them. She said: "0 people of Basra! It is true that 'Uthman was guilty and committed some blunders, but we criticized him on some of the deeds and acts committed and he repented his sins, and returned from the way he had adopted. But you people did not accept his repentance and you rushed upon him and killed him in his innocence, and cruelly shed his blood. Then you brought 'Ali to power without the approval of the Muslims. Now I have risen to support innocent 'Uthman and avenge has blood, and depose 'Ali, from his position as ruler and caliph of the Muslims."

This was the first part of 'A'ishah's oration in the square of al-Mirbad, thereby silencing all, and deeply impressing the crowd, Although they knew that 'A'ishah had resorted to false reasoning, they listened to her most attentively and heartily accepted her words. This could only be due to her power of oratory and her opportunism, and her familiarity with the technique of public speech. Otherwise her falsehood and sophistry were quite evident, since, if she had not issued the verdict of death for 'Uthman, no one would have dared to kill him. She and the accomplices of her house killed 'Uthman and then shed crocodile tears.

'A'ishah then continued on with the second part of her oration in which she spoke about 'Ali again and revealed the rancor which she had long kept in her heart against him and said: "0 people, you swore allegiance to the son of Abu-Talib without the knowledge of the Muslims and gave him the position of caliph without their approval."(159)

She continued to say: "People! Remember that 'Uthman was killed in his innocence and it is incumbent upon you to discover his assassins and kill them wherever you find them, Then you must let the members of 'Umar's council choose the caliph from among themselves. But those who have taken part in 'Uthman's murder should not attend this council or participate in its decision, since their votes will not be acceptable in the choice of the caliph, even if they had been members of 'Umar's council."(160)

In this speech, 'A'ishah first nullified 'Ali's allegiance and

caliphate, and then conferred the matter of the choice of the caliph to the members of the council, and banned 'Ali's presence in the session of the council. If we analyze 'A'ishah's words and make a formula of it, it would briefly come to this conclusion:
"No one but Talhah and az-Zubayr has a right to the caliphate, and one of these two should be chosen."

For, we know that at that time two of the six members of the council, namely 'Uthman and 'Abd ar-Rahman, were not Living. 'Ali, too, according to 'A'ishah was accused of 'Uthman's death and could not, therefore, participate in the session of the council or have a right to vote. As for the fourth member, namely Sa'd, it was easy for 'A'ishah to accuse him, too, if necessary and expel him from the council, leaving the field open for the remaining members, namely Talhah and az-Zubayr, to do what they like. And since according to 'A'ishah these two had no share in 'Uthman's death, they were qualified in every way to be chosen as caliph.

Such a historical interpretation shows that 'A'ishah cleverly intended to confine the matter of caliphate to Talhah and az-Zubayr, thus her purpose in bringing about 'Uthman's death and opposing and deposing 'Ali from his position would have been fulfilled.

3-Another point which shows that 'A'ishah had a natural power of influencing others and rousing their feelings as a skilful psychologist, is the statement she made about the members of the Banu Najiyah tribe, encouraging those who held her camel's bridle in the battle of al-Jamal. On that occasion she said:

"0 you noble house of Najiyah! Show perseverance and fortitude, for, I observe in your visage the signs of the valor and steadfastness of the Quraysh."

Thus with this statement she included the Banu Najiyah in the Quraysh tribe as and example of glory, greatness, courage and merit, thereby stimulating in them the spirit of bravery and self-sacrifice, and preparing them to stand to the last against the swords of 'Ali's army and welcome death.

This was the most effective means which 'A'ishah employed in the attainment of her goal, and she benefited much from it since the Banu Najiyah had previously been scoffed at, and the

Prophet had made a remark about Samah through whom the Banu Najiyah regarded themselves related to the Quraysh. He had said: "From my uncle Samah no son is born." Which meant that the Banxi Najiyah were not related to Samah and thus they had no connection with the Quraysh. Abu Bakr and 'Umar, too, did not consider the Banu Najiyah to be of the Quraysh tribe.(161)

4-another example of 'A'ishah's opportunism is her words addressed to the al-Azd tribe at a time when they held her camel's bridle and were fighting stubbornly. She said: "0 men of the al-Azd tribe! Show fortitude since this is the sign of free men. So long as the Banu_Dabbah were amidst my army, I could see victory and hoped for it." By saying this she aroused them to such a competitive state that in their combat they kept on falling one after another around her camel hoping to excel the men of the Dabbah house who had been so praised by 'A'ishah.

5-Again another example of her opportunism is a statement in which she uttered in 'Ali's presence soon after the battle was over and she had been captured and 'Ali was reproaching her. He said: " 'A'ishah! You incited the people to fight against me and encouraged them to shed blood, resulting in such a massacre and fratricide. Had the Prophet not ordered you to stay in your house always?"

The quick-witted 'A'ishah who had skill to deliver Long and effective orations on critical occasions, here in 'Ali's presence uttered only one brief sentence, but a sentence that could pacify a benevolent and generous man like 'Ali, and incline him to forgive her despite all her rancor and hostility. 'A'ishah said at that moment: " 'Ali! Now in your victory, shows forgiveness!" What a short but eloquent sentence! It sounded like an order but in fact it aroused human feelings of kindness and indulgence, and compelled great men towards complete forgiveness.(162)

Use made of a title

'A'ishah harps on her title of Uinrn al-Mu'minin to the people.

Text of the book

The Muslims applied the epithet of Umm al-Mu'minin (Mother of believers) to the consorts of the Prophet, and all of them were known by this title. But 'A'ishah made a more effective use of the title than the others, and with this effective weapon she had gained an unprecedented strong position in the Muslim society. She made people tremble with this epithet, humbled them and forced submission on them.

It should be said that this power and influence had been gained since the time of the two elder caliphs, namely Abu Bakr and 'Umar, and had continued on until 'Ali's time.

She used the title on all occasions and reminded the people of it. In preparation for the battle of al-Jamal she wrote a letter to Zayd ibn Sawhan at the opening of which she employed this title and she invited him towards assistance and co-operation. Here is the text of the letter:

"This is a letter form 'A'ishah umm al-Mu'minin, daughter of Abu Baker, consort of the Prophet of God, to her good son Zayd ibn Sawhan. After praising God, 0 Zayd! The moment you receive this letter, depart to us and help us in this war. If you do not obey and refuse to aid us, at least stay away from 'Ali and abstain from all help to him." (163)

Again 'A'ishah reminded Ka'b ibn Suwar in Basra of this title, thereby wholly altering that dignified man's attitude and decision. At a time when Ka'b had retired to his house as a declaration of his neutrality towards the people and both armies. 'A'ishah mounted her mule, went to his house and talked with him. Ka'b refused to give a positive and favorable answer. When 'A'ishah found that her insistence was of no avail, she said:

"0 Ka'b! Am I not your mother? Do I not have the right of mother upon you?" These words overwhelmed and moved Ka'b so deeply that they destroyed the walls of his decision, and he began to discuss the possibilities and then entered the field as a

helper. Then the various branches of the Mad tribe followed the example of Ka'b and rose to aid 'A'ishah. If it had not been for her inciting words to fight 'Ali, she would have been deprived of the support of the al-Azd tribe, which was the most important tribe of Basra.

Indeed, there is a wide gap between staying at home and entering the field of battle. It was 'A'ishah's power of oratory, her opportunism, and the use she made of the title of Umm al-Mu'minin which filled the gap and transformed housekeeping into combat.

The third example of her use of the title of Umm al-Mu'minin is on the occasion when the people had encircled her camel for the sake of the same title in the battle of al-Jamal, and went ahead offering their lives. They emphasized the same title in their poems and war chants in defense of the honour of the Mother of Believers and said: "O men of the al-Azd tribe! Defend your mother, since this defense is incumbent upon you like prayer and fast, and a duty for every one of you to show respect toward this great mother."

Another said: "O people! This is your mother whose defense and protection is your religious and conscientious duty, refusal to help and support her means trampling upon the rights of a mother, an act which is considered the greatest of sins."

The al-Azd tribe picked up the dung of 'A'ishah's camel, split and smelt it and exclaimed: "What a fine perfume! How exhilarating it is!"

This was all very strange to 'A'ishah, for, not even concerning the Prophet of God had such a feeling been shown by anyone.

'A'ishah was the greatest statesman of the world

Marwan was trying to create a division in 'A'ishah's army.

Text* of *the book

'A'ishah was not only a peerless orator and eloquent speaker

among the women and orators of the world, but she also possessed extraordinary mental and political power. It was through the same power that she was able to remove all the differences and oppositions which existed in her army, and transform those intense differences into friendship and cooperation.

From the day 'A'ishah's army left Mecca there arose sings of differences and division amidst her forces. It was the plan of Marwan who was present in the army and a well-known personality, to create dispersion among them, and in the same way that he was opposed to 'Ali, he felt hostile towards Talhah and az-Zubayr, too, on account of their participation in 'Uthman's murder.

As the army was proceeding from Mecca towards Iraq, when the time arrived for the daily prayer, Marwan resorted to a stratagem to create a dispute and riot in the army to some extent in which he succeeded.

To carry out his plan, he addressed Talhah and az-Zubayr and said: "It is time for prayer and the people have lined up waiting to begin. As both of you are considered worthy by the people; which of you should I introduce as leader of the congregational prayer?"

As neither Talhah nor az-Zubayr could explicitly answer the Question and thus reveal the secret of their heart and openly offer their candidacy of this position, they remained silent and gave no answer.

But 'Abd Allah, son of az-Zubayr, said: "Now my father who is commander of the army should act as prayer leader since he is definitely worthy of this position." Muhammad, son of Talhah said: "Oh, no! My father has more merit for it and he should perform this task." Thus Marwan sowed the seed of disunion, and the dispute reached to such a point that the whole army was almost involved and the whole campaign put in danger.

'A'ishah was informed of this dispute, and she succeeded with her strong will, intelligence and skill to remove the disagreement before the prayer started and put and end to the quarrel.

She sent the following message to Marwan: "Marwan! What

do you think you are doing? Do you intend to deprive us of our purpose? Why do you cause disunion in the army? If your real purpose is related to prayer, now my sister's son, 'Abd Allah, can act as prayer leader, and the people can follow his example and keep away from dispersion."

She was thus able to put an end to the dispute andmake the soldiers obey the order to perform the prayer behind 'Abd Allah acting as leader, and place both Talhah and az-Zubayr in the first row, and at the same time she warned Marwan, hinting that she was aware of his plan and was watching him. Thus Marwan was compelled to abstain from such instigation's, and contrary to his wish, behave like a loyal soldier and obey his commander.

'A'ishah used the same method once again in Basra. On the occasion when Talhah and az-Zubayr defeated the governor of Basra' and were preparing for further victories, a difference arose between them about the question of acting as Imam of the congregational prayer. This dispute went on until 'A'ishah intervened and speedily and easily put and an end to it, and settled a complicated problem which might have produced unpleasant and dangerous consequences for the whole of her army. Again she appointed 'Abd Allah her sister's son, as leader of the prayer, and added a political reminder that after the final victory she is the authority that can choose a caliph to look after the Muslim's affairs.

This point shows that 'A'ishah not only regarded herself as emir and commander of the army, but also considered it her right to rule all the Muslims in the realm of Islam, and that she could appoint anyone she wished to administer the affairs or dismiss him from that position.

'A'ishah and her social influence

Oh! What a lovely odor this dung of 'A'ishah's camel has!

Men of the al-Azd tribe

Another characteristic of 'A'ishah was her great social influence.

She had penetrated the hearts of the Muslims to such an extent that they obeyed her devotedly and showed more submission to her than to anyone else. This influence was so deep that the rulers of the time feared her, since she could shake the foundation of their government with one sentence or verdict and start a riot against them. It was this power and influence that helped her in every uprising and combat and was an effective factor of her victory, as testified by history.

l-Imam 'Ali exonerated himself of 'Uthman's blood, and with clear arguments proved his impartiality in that matter. Yet despite his assertions and the people's awareness of the true facts about that assassination, they did not believe him. Whereas they heartily accepted the words of 'A'ishah in accusing 'Ali of complicity in 'Uthman's death, even though it was quite evident that she was resorting to scene-making and false reasoning and misrepresenting the truth.

2-'A'ishah's soldiers encircled her camel in the battle of al-Jamal like a ring and made that animal the axis of the combat and victory, circling round it and loudly crying out: "0 Muslims! Defend your mother, 'A'ishah with your heart and soul, since your protection of her is a religious and moral duty for everyone of you, like your prayer and fast, and negligence and weakness in this matter is an offense and sin.

This moving scene and the ardor of the people towards 'A'ishah were due to her extraordinary social power and influence, a position, which is not attainable by every individual.

3-It was owing to the same popularity and social influence that 'A'ishah was able to drag Ka'b ibn Suwar, that great and influential judge of Basra, away from his retirement in his house to the field of battle and make him take the bridle of her camel and act as her advance guard.

4-The men of the Mad tribe picked up and smelt the dung of 'A'ishah's camel as if it was perfume, and regarded it as the most exquisite order, whereas such a conduct had not been shown even to the mount of the Prophet.

5-In the battle of al-Jamal 'A'ishah's army, contrary to the custom of all wars, carried no banner, but 'A'ishah's camel on which she was riding in litter served as the army's banner, and

move on ahead of the forces. So long as this live banner was on its feet and kept its balance, ‘A’ishah’s warriors repaired every setback and showed a stubborn resistance’s against ‘Ali’s army. Even the resignation of az-Zubayr as commander, and his retirement from the battlefield had no effect on the army, and the fall of Talhah and ‘Abd Allah, son of az-Zubayr, did not leave the smallest reaction in the morale of ‘A’ishah’s fighters, But when ‘A’ishah’s camel was knocked down ‘A’ishah’s army was badly defeated and routed, ending with their flight in every direction.

The above was an account of ‘A’ishah’s social and political personality, her intellectual genius, her astonishing talent in make-believe and sophistry. It gave a picture of her true visage, her spiritual and other characteristics all of, which were described in previous chapters.

And yet despite her strange and extraordinary personality, she always showed a weak point in her life, since she was easily influenced by the bewitching words of ‘Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr, and was deceived by him, an account of which will be given in subsequent chapters.

An account of ‘Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr

In my heart I cherish the hostility with the houusehold of the Prophet

‘Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr

The most lovable persons for ‘A’ishah

As ‘A’ishah was an outstanding person in her mental qualities, she was also peerless in her deep affection for her kith and kin, and above all her relations she showed intense liking for ‘Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr, the son of her sister, Asma’. She did not act like an aunt to him, but like a kind and affectionate mother who loves her sole child. It was because of this affection that she chose the title of Umm ‘Abd Allah for herself and became known by that title among the people.(164)

Hisham bin ‘Urwah says: “I have not seen anyone prayed for

so much by ‘A’ishah during the battle as for ‘Abd Allah, begging God for his safety and victory. After the battle when she was informed of the good news of his safety, she felt overjoyed and prostrated herself in thankfulness to Gad, and gave a reward of ten thousand drachmas to the person who had brought the good tidings.

When ‘A’ishah was ill, her nephews along with ‘Abd Allah were among those who visited her. When ‘Abd Allah saw her pale face and weak condition, fears flowed down his cheeks. ‘A’ishah looked up, and on seeing his face, felt very sad and weeping she said: “‘Abd Allah it is very hard for me to see you sad, uneasy and weeping. My son! You are my darling and the dearest of my kins. My dear! I say openly that next to the Prophet and my parents I know of no one who is loved by me as much as you, and no one has found such a place in my heart as you.” She had willed that after her death her private residence be given to ‘Abd Allah.(165)

Enmity of ‘Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr with Banu Hashim

‘Abd Allah who was so much loved by ‘A’ishah was the most obstinate enemy of the Prophet’s household, as if this rancor and enmity had been born with him and was mingled with his blood.

He grew up, found a position, and owing to his intense dislike of ‘Ali, he changed his father’s attitude towards his cousin, ‘Ali, and turned it into cynicism and hostility and brought him into the rank of ‘Ali’s enemies and was able to arouse him to combat and war.

‘Ali himself reveals this fact and says: “az-Zubayr was our friend and supporter so that he was regarded as a member of Banu Hashim, until his evil and incompetent son ‘Abd Allah grew up, and thenceforth az-Zubayr joined the rank of stubborn enemies.”(166)

‘Abd Allah’s enmity with the Prophet’s household went so far that in Mecca he abstained for forty consecutive weeks from the greeting and mention of the Prophet’s name, in the sermon of Friday prayer When they protested to him, he answered: “I have no objection to mentioning the name of the Prophet, but in

order to humiliate those who take pride in him and regard themselves related to him, I abandon this greeting and abstain from mentioning his name.

This story has also been narrated by ‘Umar ibn Shabbah, Ibn al-Kalbi al-Waqidi but other historians and some other historians like Muhammad ibn Habib Abu ‘Ubaydah and Mu’ammar ibn al-Muthana say that ‘Abd Allah gave the following answer to the people’s protest: “The Prophet has some unworthy members among his kins who pride themselves in the mention of his name, I wish to pound them by my refusal to mention his name thereby smashing their pride and boast.”(167)

‘Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr himself said to ‘Abd Allah ibn al‘Abbas: “For forty years I have cherished the enmity to your house in my heart and have concealed it until today.”(168)

The .,enmity of ‘Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr was turned against every member of the Banu Hashim house, but mainly towards ‘Ali, and sometimes this enmity reached the point of abuse and insult. (169)

One example of this hostility is that ‘Abd Allah gathered Muhammad ibn al-Hanafjyah, ‘Abd Allah ibn al-’Abbas and seventeen others of Banu Hashim including al-Hasan al-Mujtaba and imprisoned them in a dark and narrow valley of Mecca named “Banu ‘Arim valley”. And ordered them to collect much wood at the mouth of that valley, intending to set fire to it after a period of grace and burn them.

When al-Mukhtar learnt of this plot, he quickly dispatched four thousand fighters to Mecca, and saved the Banu Hashim prisoners from ‘Abd Allah’s fire. Some historians have narrated this incident in the above manner, but Abu al-Faraj describes this story as follows:

‘Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr had a deep and long enmity towards Banu Hashim and spared no effort to accuse and slander them.

He incited the people against them and was always on the alert to cause a dispute and sedition among them. On the pulpit and in his sermon he attacked and sometimes openly insulted them. On some occasions Ibn ‘Abbas and some other high members of Banu Hashim retorted and contradicted him. Abu al-Faraj continues to say that at a suitable opportunity ‘Abd

Allah ibn az-Zubayr seized Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyah and a number of Banu Hashim's house and imprisoned them in the 'Arim prison. Meanwhile he was informed that Abu 'Abd Allah al-Jadali and other friends of Muhammad ibn al-Hanafjyah were hurrying towards Mecca to save the prisoners. So at once 'Abd Allah ordered them to heap up firewood at the entrance of the prison and set fire to it intending to burn Muhammad and his friends. Abu 'Abd Allah on hearing the report made a greater haste and as the flame was beginning to rise high, he reached the prison, extinguished the fire and set free Muhammad ibn al-Hanafjyah and other prisoners. (170)

The influence of 'Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr in starting the battle of al-Jamal

'Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr was the active motivator of the battle of al-Jamal.

Text of the book

This same son of az-Zubayr who in enmity wanted to set fire to Banu Hashim, also for the same reason made his father change his attitude towards his cousin, 'Ali, and turn his affection into hostility. The same 'Abd Allah took control of 'A'ishah who had a dislike and hatred for 'Ali to rouse her for combat with 'Ali thus starting the battle of al-Jamal among the Muslims. This point is not a baseless claim, but a fact, which is confirmed by strong historical evidence.

Ibn 'Abd al-Barr narrates that one-day 'A'ishah said:

"Whenever you see 'Abd Allah son of 'Umar, bring him to me as I wish to speak with him." They brought him to 'A'ishah and she said: "O Abu 'Abd ar-Rahman! On the day I was departing for Basra, why did you not advise me against that journey?"

He answered: "On that day you were facing a man like 'Abd Allah bin az-Zubayr who controlled you mentally and had imposed his view on you to such an extent that you had no power to contradict him. Thus my words were of no avail against his, and could not prevent your departure."

'A'ishah said: "Well, all is passed but you should know that if

you had dissuaded me from that journey, I would not have taken any step for departure and would not have left my home and city."[171]

Before the battle of al-Jamal, too, Imam 'Alt wrote a letter to 'A'ishah as follows: " 'A'ishah! Your intense affection for Ibn-az-Zubayr and your kinship with Talhah will drag you to a course, which will end with God's punishment."

Historians say that when 'A'ishah reached al-Haw'ab and heard the bark of the dogs there, she remembered the words of the Prophet about it and his warning. So she decided to let the army stay where it was and she herself returned home.

When 'Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr heard of this decision, at once he went to 'A'ishah and said: "Those who have called this place al-Haw'ab are mistaken; for we have left al-Haw'ab behind and are well beyond it."

Owing to her deep affection for 'Abd Allah 'A'ishah believed him and accepted his words. Thus despite all her intelligence and sagacity, here she showed a weakness which proved her total helplessness before 'Abd Allah. But Ibn az-Zubayr was not content with this, and fearing that someone might tell her the truth and cause her to revise her decision, he did not leave her alone and stayed constantly with her until they reached Basra and continued their sedition and combat.

If 'Abd Allah had not on this occasion shown his old-standing enmity, and had not deceived 'A'ishah the battle of al-Jamal might never have taken place, and such a heavy bloodshed might not have resulted. That is why we said that 'Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr was the actual motivator of that battle.

So, dear reader, all the above pieces of historical evidence prove that the real instigator of 'A'ishah and the main agent of starting the battle of al-Jamal was 'Abd Allah ibn az-Zubayr, not 'Abd Allah ibn Saba' whose name has been spread so widely by historians thus turning a forged and mythical story into an authentic historical fact, an account of which fable will be given in the next chapter.

Part Three
The myth of ‘Abd Allah ibn Saba’

The myth of ‘Abd Allah ibn Saba’

This fable is fabricated by Sayf.
Text of the book

Our sources in the description of the topics have about the battle of al-Jamal have been the traditions and narrations which are considered reliable by all historians. In this survey we have selected the topics from such books and quotations by the narrators and biographers whose statements have been confirmed by those who are well acquainted with such great personalities.

As against these genuine narrations and reliable history books, which we have adopted, there exist narrations which have- been forged by a single person, a person whom all biographers have called non-religious and heretical, and yet his false narrations have been quoted by writers and historians in their books. To be more explicit, all these stories and narrations have been fabricated by a man named Sayf ibn ‘Umar atTamimi al-Kufi who is said to have died about the year 170 of the Hijrah.

During his life he had fabricated many false myths and fables entering them into historical books. One of these myths is Sayf’s creation of an imaginary character whom he has clothed in the garment of a real person to whom he has given the name of ‘Abd Allah ibn Saba’.

This imaginary character was no more than a myth, since such a man had never existed in the world, but he was fabricated by Sayf ibn ‘Umar so that he could propagate all kinds of falsehood in ‘Abd Allah’s name and have a free hand in

such forgeries. Thus he made up all kinds of strange stories and fables and placed them at the disposal of the Muslims in the name of his fictitious character.

One of his fables briefly says that a man of Sanaa of Yemen, named ‘Abd Allah ibn Saba’, also called Jbn as-Sawda’, apparently embraced Islam in the caliphate of ‘Uthman but he was in fact a very fanatical Jew, and a mysterious, cunning person who wanted to cause riot and sedition among the Muslims and divide them and destroy their unity. It was to this end that he embraced Islam and showed himself a true and devout Muslim in order to deceive them. He began to carry out his plan in the following way:

He began to travel to important Islamic centers and cities and visit Medina, Egypt, ash-Sham Kufah and Basra, and in these places he presented himself as a missionary, giving the Muslims the good tidings of the resurrection of the Prophet and his return among the people. He also propagated this point that the Prophet’s immediate guardian and successor was ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib whose right of caliphate had been usurped by ‘Uthman. ‘Abd Allah ibn Saba’ pretended to incline to and support ‘Ali. A number of the Prophet’s companions and other Muslims were taken in by him and believed his words. ‘Ammar ibn Yasir Abu Dharr Abu Hudhayfah, Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr Malik al-Ashtar, Hujr ibn ‘Adi and others who were the most famous of the Prophet’s companions and their dependents followed and gathered around him. Thus that mysterious Jew managed to win the attention of these exalted men and formed a party known as the Saba’js and it was the members of this group of companions and Muslims who besieged ‘Uthman in his house and killed him.

So in Sayf ibn ‘Umar’s imagination, the Jew, ‘Abd Allah ibn Saba’, cunningly entered the Muslim ranks, pretended to love and support ‘Ali, formed a party of Saba’is consisting of the Prophet’s companions and other Muslims and eventually killed their caliph.

Sayf ibn ‘Umar in the same fable continues to narrate the historical events subsequent to ‘Uthman’s assassination down to the battle of al-Jamal, and then with his imaginative brain he created another character in addition to ‘Abd Allah ibn Saba’

and named him al-Qa'qa' ibn 'Amr, and made him a companion of the Prophet[(172)] and gave him the mission of mediation and peace making, and then continued his fable as follows:

In the battle of al-Jamal al-Qa'qa' ibn 'Amr tried hard to establish peace, sometimes by contact with 'All, and on other occasions with 'A'ishah Talhah and az-Zubayr, inviting them to peace and tranquility and warning them of war and bloodshed. At last al-Qa'qa' succeeded as a dove of peace to win the agreement of the commanders of both armies to establish peace between them and so once more silence and tranquility reigned over both camps. The Saba'is, namely 'Abd Allah ibn Saba', and his followers, were worried about the consequences of this peace and vexed at the disruption of their destructive schemes. So one dark night they gathered together for discussion and prepared plans for ending that peace.

'Abd Allah ibn Saba' himself, the hero of his fable, proposed that his followers be divided into two groups, one group joining 'Ali's army as supporters, and the other group going to 'A'ishah's forces as followers, and then one dark night at a certain hour rush upon each other, making both armies believe that they have been attacked by the other army, thus rekindling the fire of war and turning al-Qa'qa''s peace into a bloody combat.

The sabotage party gladly approved the plan of 'Abd. Allah ibn Saba' and carried it out excellently one dark night, benefiting much from it. And despite the inclination of the commander of both sides, they incited the Muslims against one another and kindled the fire of war again after it had been extinguished, thus producing the battle of al-Jamal.

This is the story of how the battle of al-Jamal was started, according to Sayf ibn 'Umar, a story that has no true foundation, since the heroes of it, namely 'Abd Allah ibn Saba'. and al-Qa'qa' ibn 'Amr were fictitious characters. Even though the whole story is a myth, fabricated by Sayf ibn 'Umar before the year 170 of the Hijrah, some writers of history have adopted it included it in their books. In this way with the passage of time it has assumed the form of a real historical event, finding a place for itself in reliable books of history, and on this basis a reader may not allow himself the slightest doubt about its authenticity. Thus most Islamic historians and even

Orientalists have not realized that the story is only a fable fabricated by that liar.

Sayf ibn 'Umar is the only source of the myth

There is no one else but Sayf who is at the root of this fable, and everyone else has adapted it from him. at-Tabari (who died in 310 of the Hijrah) borrowed the story from this narrator and quoted it in his book. Ibn 'Asakir (who died in 571 of the Hijrah) did the same thing for his book of the "History of Medina and Damascus"; Ibn Abi Bakr (who died in the 741 of the Hijrah) for his "al-Tamhid wa al-bayan" and adh-Dhahabi (who died in 747 of the Hijrah) in his book of history. Thus their only source had been Sayf ibn 'Umar.

Later historians too until the present time have taken the story directly from at-Tabari who had copied it from that myth-making narrator. We have revealed this fact in our book on 'Abd Allah ibn Saba' and have shown how later historians have relied on at-Tabari in quoting the story. Here we cite as examples two past and present writers and historians:

1-Among past historians we must mention Ibn Khaldun, the great thinker and historian. In his book of "al-Mubtada' wa al-khabar" he describes the murder of 'Uthman and the battle of al-Jamal and then quotes some parts of this fable. He says in volume two, page 425: "Such was the story of the battle of al-Jamal which we have briefly quoted from at-Tabari's history, and as we consider this book reliable, we have confined our description of this story to that book and quoted it." He also says on page 247 of the same book: "I have selected all these historical events which are briefly quoted in my book from the great history of Muhammad ibn Jarir at-Tabari since I have found his history book more reliable than other books, and have relied on it in my quotations and since in it there are few cases of doubt, criticism and sarcasm levelled at the great and good companions of the Prophet."

2-As for the present historians, we may mention Sa'id al-Afghani in whose book of "'A'ishah wa as-siyasah in pages 32-34, pages 48-52, pages 145-147, and pages 155-185 he speaks of their false stories of 'Abd Allah ibn Saba' and his followers and speaks of the source of his book on page five. He says:

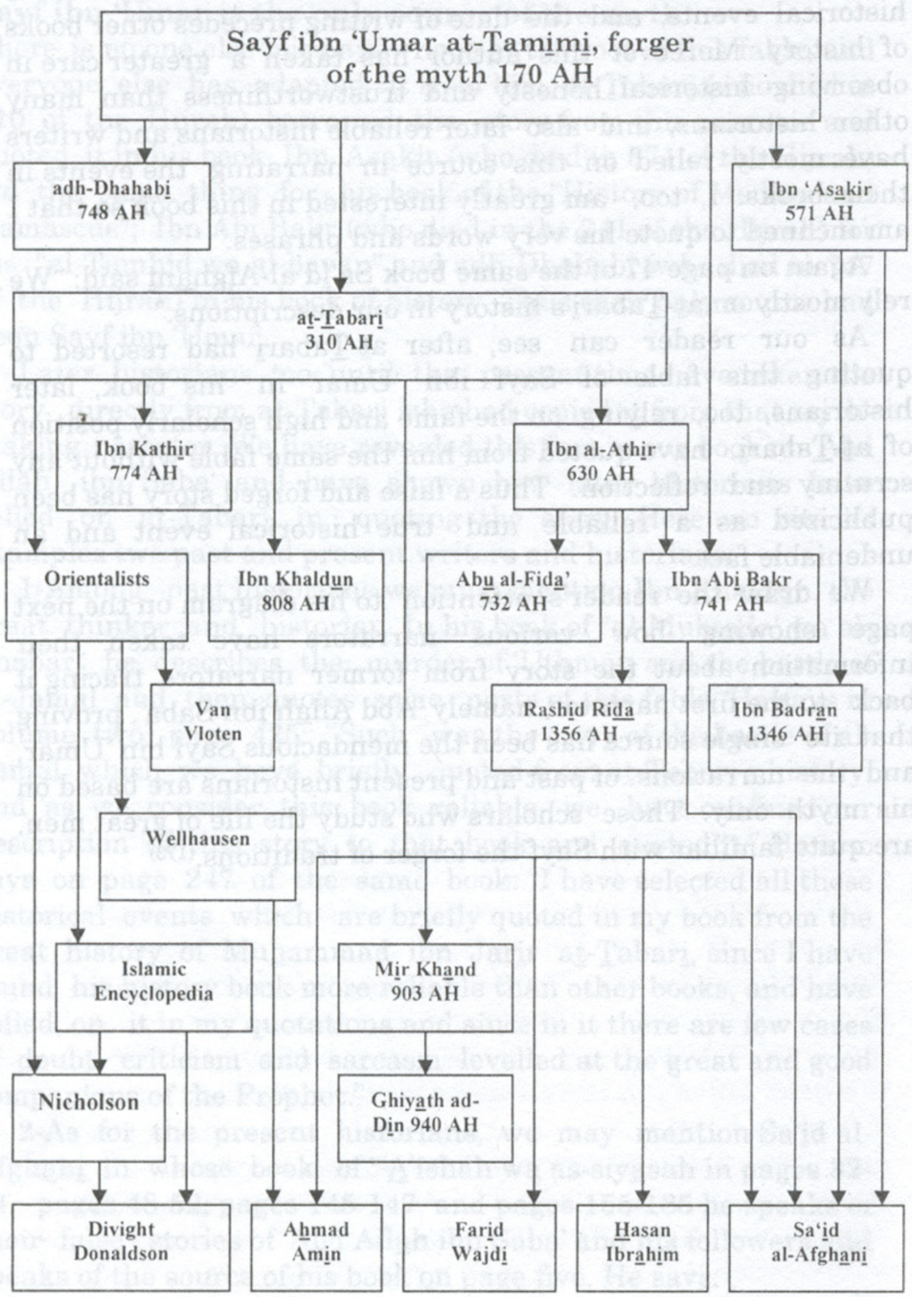
"In narrating historical events I rely on the history of at-Tabari from which alone I have taken historical topics, since at-Tabari's history is closer than all other books and sources to historical events, and the date of writing precedes other books of history. Moreover this author has taken a greater care in observing historical honesty and trustworthiness than many other historians, and also later reliable historians and writers have mostly relied on this source in narrating the events in their books. I, too, am greatly interested in this book so that I am inclined to quote his very words and phrases."

Again on page 47 of the same book Sa'id al-Afghani said: "We rely mostly on at-Tabari's history in our descriptions."

As our reader can see, after at-Tabari had resorted to quoting this fable of Sayf ibn 'Umar in his book, later historians, too, relying on the fame and high scholarly position of at-Tabari have quoted from him the same fable without any scrutiny and reflection. Thus a false and forged story has been publicized as a reliable and true historical event and an undeniable fact.

We draw the reader's attention to his diagram on the next page showing how various narrators have taken their information about the story from former narrators tracing it back to the first narrator, namely 'Abd Allah ibn Saba', proving that its single source has been the mendacious Sayf bin 'Umar, and the narrations of past and present historians are based on his myth only. Those scholars who study the life of great men, are quite familiar with Sayf the forger of traditions.(173)

The myth of ‘Abd Allah ibn Saba’ and how it appeared



Inner complexes are united

'A'ishah! Do you utter such words about 'Ali?
Zaynab, daughter of Umm Salamah

After the battle of al-Jamal which ended with the victory of 'Ali, 'A'ishah returned home deeply distressed and broken- hearted, since in addition to her defeat and failure she had lost her cousin Talhah, a man for whom she had cherished many hopes and wished to take the seat of the caliphate and hold the rein of Muslim affairs.

In this battle, not only Talhah, 'A'ishah's cousin but also Muhammad bin-Talhah, another very closer relatives of hers, were killed. az-Zubayr, too, who was the husband of her sister, Asma'(174) and commander of the army lost his life.

It was in this state of deep sorrow as well as regret for ignoring the counsels of well-wishers that she returned home. She came back to Medina with a heart full of rage and rancor for 'Ali. However she had no remedy but to conceal her hatred and enmity in her heart during the life and rule of 'Ali and hide that fire under the ashes of fortitude.

But when the news of 'Ali's death reached her she prostrated herself in thankfulness and was so overjoyed that she recited the following lines:

'Ali has gone and there is no return for him. With his death I was overjoyed in the same way that a traveller's family is on his return. Indeed, my eyes were brightened with his departure."

After reciting these lines she asked: Who is his assassin? They said that he was of the Murad tribe. Then she recited a poem the meaning of which is as follows:

"Although in his ('Ali's) death he was far from us, Yet long live the youth who brought us the news And overjoyed us!

When 'A'ishah's words were heard by Zaynab, daughter of Umm Salamah(175), she reproached 'A'ishah saying: "'A'ishah! Do you utter such words about 'Ali? And do you regard his death a source of joy for yourself?"

'A'ishah said in apology: "I have become forgetful. Please

remind me when I am in such a state."[176]

According to Abu al-Faraj, after this conversation she recited a poem the meaning of which is as follows:

"It was customary for us to eulogize
Our friends with many titles and epithets,
And compose odes and poems in their praise,
But that time has gone and that era is past.
Now your praising them is like the buzzof a fly
That is of no avail nor is it of the slightest use."

What 'A'ishah meant was that with 'Ali's death the occasion had passed for praising him.

The above account showed examples of 'A'ishah's hatred and enmity towards 'Ali which she expressed knowingly or involuntarily and thus, revealed her complexes about him.

'A'ishah's hostility towards 'Ali's children

'A'ishah's enmity was not confined to 'Ali. It was so deep and wide that it included his children and family, too.

Historians narrate that 'A'ishah veiled herself in the presence of 'Ali's sons al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and thus she regarded them as strangers, despite the fact that Ibn 'Abbas objected to her and told her that both al-Hasan and al-Husayn were intimate relatives.[177]

Ibn Sa'd after describing 'A'ishah's conduct says: Abu Hanifah[178] and Malik [179] are quoted saying that the wife of a man would be always intimate towards his children and grandchildren, and none of them can marry her. The Muslims are unanimous about this point.

In our opinion, this matter about which all Muslims are unanimous and which is confirmed by Ibn 'Abbas Abu_Hanifah and Malik is not something, which 'A'ishah did not know. But 'A'ishah's purpose in her conduct was to negate the kinship of al-Hasan and al-Husayn to the Prophet as his grandchildren.

‘A’ishah lays the foundation of a second war

‘A’ishah started an even more violent war against ‘Ali.
Text of the book

From the day that ‘A’ishah incited the people against ‘Uthman and started a great riot, her relationship with the Banu Umayyah who were of ‘Uthman’s house and his supporters was darkened, and this disagreement changed into an irreconcilable hostility with ‘Uthman’s assassination. But when ‘Ali became caliph and ‘A’ishah rose against him, these two hostile sides, namely ‘A’ishah and the Umayyads reconciled. Although these two were opposed to each other, that both of them were hostile to ‘Ali and this common objective brought them closer to each other and made a kind of friendship possible.

The Umayyads gathered around ‘A’ishah’s banner, and turned their enmity into friendship and alliance. They concentrated their forces in order to overthrow ‘Ali from his position as caliph then settle their own differences. But contrary to their expectation ‘Ali emerged victorious in that battle and compelled ‘A’ishah to retire her house.

Although after the battle of al-Jamal, ‘A‘ishah had lost her army, power and. influence, yet she could not remain quiet or show fortitude towards those vexing complexes. So she made her relationship and affiance stronger with the Umayyads and their chief of the time, Mu’awiyah, and concluded a pact of cooperation with them to resume her activities against ‘Ali.

She took preliminary steps for another uprising, and thus started another war against ‘Ali, the consequence of which were even more harmful and dangerous than the battle of al-Jamal.

‘A’ishah could not abandon her opposition to ‘Ali, and so after the battle of al-Jamal she resumed that opposition by means of a cold war and verbal attacks. But this cold war did not come to an end with the death of ‘Ali, and its scope lasted to the last moments of ‘A’ishah’s Life. She continued this hostility towards ‘Ali’s Sons, and this time she resorted to a war of fabricating traditions against ‘Ali the evil results of which have

Unfortunately remained down to the present day in the history of Islam. Even after so many centuries the ill-omened consequences of which, have not been removed from the realm of Islam.

Mu’awiyah had always been opposed to ‘Ali and used all his force and power in this course. He resorted to every possible kind of trickery and cunningness, and employed all his wealth and power for a war against ‘Ali. Therefore ‘A’ishah became a great and strong supporter of Mu’awiyah. You will read an account of this alliance in the third volume of this book which will be published soon under the title of "‘A’ishah in the time of Mu’awiyah"

We pray to God to make this book a source of benefit to all Muslims and a means of eternal salvation for us.